

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE  
School of Management  
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# CHANGING ACADEMIC WORK IN CHINA: UNDER THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC PROMOTION POLICY

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## ABSTRACT

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Chinese higher education system has been under transformation since 1980s with the introduction of market mechanisms. Academic profession in China has also been changing under the impact of various approaches of new public management. One important aspect is concerned with the performance-based academic promotion policy. This study explores how the current academic promotion policy affects academic work in China. As to gain an in-depth understanding, a single case design and new institutional theory are employed in this study. The research results show that under the impact of academic promotion policy, academics have internationalized their activities, put priority to research, been involved in social service, and improved the quality of research. Other findings of the study shows Chinese academics calls for fair and recognizable evaluation criteria of quality of academics' performance. The imperfections of research groups and the conflicts of enforcing managerial activities in the case reflect the fact that academic profession in China is facing challenges of making a good use of managerial tools in the context of Chinese traditional culture.

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## List of Abbreviations

HE: higher education

HEI: higher education institution

MoE: Ministry of Education of China

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and problem statement

Today, higher education (HE) is perceived as peculiar among the various sectors of production and service in modern society: higher education institutions (HEIs) are regarded as institutions with ‘a relatively open set of multiple goals; a loose mechanism of coercion, controlled and steered from above; and a high degree of fragmentation and strong influence of the principal workers’ (Enders & Musselin, 2008). Enders and Musselin (2008) pointed out that these ‘principal workers’ are ‘academics’, and they are ‘on the determination of goals, the management and administration of institutions and the daily routines of work’ (p.126). ‘Academics’ are understood as ‘academic staff working in universities and other higher education institutions in different ranks, with different contracts and at different stages of their career...[Not only] ‘professoriate’ as the traditional core of the academic profession, but other faculty groups [are included] as well.’ (Enders & Musselin, 2008). To be more specific, ‘academics’ in this study refers to full-time academic staff members with different academic ranks in Chinese public universities.

Academics have been considered as key stakeholders and academic profession as the key profession in terms of its significant influence on institutions, as well as on the interrelations between higher education and different sectors of production and service (Enders & Musselin, 2008; Pang & Shen, 2012). Nevertheless, several researches (B. F. Li, Yang, & Zhou, 2012; X. J. Li & Su, 2007; Song & Fang, 2008; Yuan, 2010; Z. H. Zhang & Su, 2012; Zheng, 2005) suggested that today academics in Chinese Universities are under intense pressure, especially the job pressure, which makes them become the social vulnerable group in universities. A survey among 72 HEIs in China showed that 94.6% of university academic staff members felt pressured about the job, among which 35.6% felt intensively pressured (Z. H. Zhang & Su, 2012). Another survey conducted by Yuan (2010) demonstrated that 95% of young academic members were under intense pressure. Most of them lacked enough sleeping time (Song & Fang, 2008; Yuan, 2010). In Song and Fang’s (2008) study, about 70.6% of the young academics considered themselves as living in sub-healthy status. Insomnia, anxiety reaction, anorexia, optic disorder, etc. are common diseases among academics. Young academics are under more intense pressure than senior academics are. ‘They are required to publish more in order to be promoted. The phenomenon of job burnout is very common among young faculty, and impedes the creativity of the faculty as a whole.’ (Mohrman, Geng, & Wang, 2011). Bearing more workload,

however, young academics are earning a lower income, compared with senior academic staff members.

There are many reasons for academics under pressure, but striving for academic promotion is regarded as one of the most influential factors (L. L. Li, 2010; Z. C. Liu & Sun, 2009; Y. N. Wang & Zhu, 2011). Academic promotion is understood as a movement from one academic rank to another higher rank. Academic ranks in China include ‘teacher assistant’, ‘lecturer’, ‘associate professor’, and ‘full professor’. Li (2010) maintained that the current academic promotion policy (since 2003) has resulted in intense pressure in two aspects: for one thing, the introduction of the competition mechanism and performance-based evaluation in the academic promotion system has broken the iron-bowls (permanent employment relationship) of academics, so that academics have to deal with the pressure of securing job positions. For another, the current academic promotion policy has higher and stricter requirements for academics in terms of research, teaching and social service than before. This for sure made academics feel more pressured and more restricted on academic activities. Liu & Sun’s (2009) survey on 802 academics from 6 HEIs presented that the intense pressure of academics was closely related to the current academic promotion policy. Similar results can be found in Wang & Zhu’s (2011) survey.

Intense job pressure is one significant manifestation of the effects of academic promotion on academic work. Academic work means ‘what is it that academics actually do?’ (Clark, 1987, p. 70). Academic work in this study, is understood as ‘the daily duties and practices of an academic life’ (Clark, 1987, p. xxvii), covering research, teaching, social service, and the different combinations of research, teaching and social service. Another noticeable effect, which we cannot fail to pay attention to, is the misconduct of academic activities. *The ‘Qiushi’ Case* in 2005 is one impressive example, which shocked the Chinese academy like a bomb at that moment, and led more than 400 academics to gather in Beijing and sign against Shen’s misconduct. Shen, a Chinese associate professor in Tianjin, plagiarized 13 academic papers of others’, and got them published as a monograph, just for the purpose of meeting the requirement of academic promotion, which was admitted by Shen himself (H. Zhang, 2005). During the past decade, similar cases have been reported by mass media from time to time (Nandu, 2014). Li (2012) analyzed the reasons for academic plagiarism and his analysis result showed that the pressure to get promoted and economic effects related to promotion is one of the most significant reasons behind plagiarism. Another study



concerning the science research activities in China HEIs by Mohrman et al (2011) also supported Li's (2012) viewpoint. Mohrman et al. (2011) maintained that there is a major connection between current instances of misconduct in scientific research and the evaluation of academics. Liu (2008) believed that the current academic promotion policy was the fundamental reason for the multiplication of worthless publications in China. Besides, Pang and Shen (2012) also stated that the quantification of performance indicators and criteria in evaluating and promoting academics is regarded as the key element affecting the healthy development of academic profession in Chinese HE system.

As previous studies and data show, though the academic promotion policy in China is intended to motivate academics to produce excellent teaching, research and provide social service (Zou, 2006), it might also have other un-intended effects on academics, e.g. intense job pressure, misconduct of academic activities, multiplication of worthless publications, etc.. Considering that academics are principle stakeholders in HEIs and important for the development of HE system, we find it significant to research on how the academic promotion policy affects academic work in China's context. For one thing, to study the effects of the academic promotion system can help people better understand the Chinese academic promotion system. For another, to explore the way in which the academic promotion is influencing academic work may be useful for policy-makers, university managers and academics to work together to provide a supportive environment for academics. However, currently although there have been some studies regarding the academic promotion system in China, there are considerable gaps in our understanding of the impact of the current academic promotion policy in China's context. So far, there has not been a single study conducted concerning the impacts of the current academic promotion policy on academic work in Chinese universities. Section 2.3 will describe the research gap of the study.

## 1.2 Research questions

As mentioned before in last section, there are knowledge gaps in the aspect of understanding the impacts of academic promotion policy. In order to increase our scholarly understanding of the impact of performance-based management, especially the performance-based academic promotion policy, on academic work, we should study the impacts of the current academic promotion policy on academic work in China's context should be carried out. Therefore, this study is designed and carried out to fulfill this aim. The objectives of the study include:

- to describe the current policies and practices of the university academic promotion in China's context;
- to explore the perceived effects of academic promotion on academic work, including different activities: research, teaching and social service;
- to understand the ways and the extent the policy and practices of academic promotion may influence academic work;
- to provide some implications for policy-making.

Therefore, the research question of this study is:

How do the policies and practices of current university academic promotion influence academic work in China's context?

*Sub research questions:*

- 1) What are the policies and practices of the current university academic promotion in China and in B University?
- 2) What are the effects of academic promotion on academic work in Faculty E in B University?
- 3) In which ways and to what extent are the policies and practices of academic promotion affecting academic work in Faculty E?

### 1.3 Organization of the study

In order to answer the research questions proposed above, the researcher has developed an analytical framework based on new institutional theory as shown by Scott (Scott, 2008). Scott (2008: 2010) maintained institutions are comprised of regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive pillars or elements, which provide the situational environments to have impact on individuals' decision-making and actions. If we understand the current academic promotion policy as an aspect of regulative elements, academics as social actors in institutions, academics work or academic activities as social actors' actions in the institutional environment, we can use the framework of three pillars of institutions, which is proposed by Scott (2008), as the theoretical framework to understand and analyze the issue. The analytical framework will be described in Chapter 3. A single case study will be used to gain an in-depth analysis of the topic. Multiple sources of data, including documents, literatures and interviews will be used and analyzed in the study. Detailed description and justification of methodology for this study will be shown in Chapter 4. Before going directly to the description of the analytical framework and methodology, Chapter 2 will review the literature

about Chinese academic profession and Chinese academic promotion system, and also demonstrates the research gap and the significance of the study. Chapter 5 deals with the analysis result based on collected data. The last chapter discusses the major findings of the study and also possible implications for policy-making and future research.

#### 1.4 Limitations and delimitations

Before we start to present the study, some delimitations and limitations of the study should be classified first.

Frist, due to the limited time of the study and opting for its feasibility, the study is limited to only one case single case: an academic community in faculty of education in a Chinese research university in Beijing city, which means the findings of the single case cannot be easily generalized to other cases. For one thing, because the selected university is a public research university, which means research results may not apply to private institutions. One the other hand, readers should be aware that the results should be limited to the field of education as only the faculty of education has been under review in this study.

Second, though by employing new institutional theory, the researcher will develop the analytical framework for the study, it is always a challenge to have an accurate understanding of concepts of institutions as well as operationalizing them into the analytical framework. It is difficult to avoid simplification of the key concepts. Readers should also notice the interpretation or operationalization of concepts of institutions, which aims to support the study, has delimited the study to a narrow focus. For instance, when explaining the cultural-cognitive pillar of institutions, the research puts more emphasis on the cognitive dimension rather than focusing on both perspectives. Nevertheless, we believe cognitive perceptions are subjective internal interpretation of the external cultural environment. Besides, a lack of knowledge about the interactions of three pillars inside an institution and about the way how the three pillars influence social actions set limits to a further understanding of the interactions among regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive guidelines for academics' activities and changes in academic work.

Third, the conclusion of the study could be challenged due to the small population of participants, in particular the participants from full professors. The study here is rather experimental.

Fourth, since the main data source of the study is interview, which means the data are self-reported. There might be potential limitations in terms of inconsistent interpretations of concepts, intentional and unintentional misrepresentation, and tendencies towards reporting socially desirable answers.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Academic profession in China

Traditionally, Chinese scholarship was connected to the fate of the nation, which expects Chinese academics by nature aspire to work for the good of the community, the nation and the world (Chen, 2003). Chinese academics are regarded as civil servants to expose the shortcomings of the regime while serving it (Mohrman et al., 2011). Though the concept of 'academics' in Ancient China is not exactly the same as we understand it today, the idea of academics being civil servants has been imprinted in culture of Chinese academic profession, which has influence in the formation of *danwei* culture later in modern China.

When the People Republic of China was founded in 1949, the HE system emulated the Soviet Union model: HEIs as well as academics in institutions were separated strictly according to different functions, namely research and teaching, and highly fragmented according to disciplines, as to mostly dedicate to practical subjects needed for national development (Mohrman et al., 2011). At that moment, the whole HE system in China was highly centralized and each institution was designed to be a *danwei*. The whole HE system could be regarded as a national *danwei* system. *Danwei*, referring to Chinese non-governmental but public organization, is unique to China whilst there is no counterpart in western countries (Yan, 2010). *Danwei* is similar to a multi-functional autarchy, which provides resources and support to men inside the system, called *danweiren*, while *danweirens* contribute all the earnings and achievements to the *danwei*, with a strong sense of belongingness and loyalty towards the *danwei* (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). The relation between nation, *danwei*, and *danweiren* in a *danwei* system is believed to be a stable hierarchical relation (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). From 1949 to 1986, every HEIs in China was a *danwei*, which constituted the base of HE system (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). Academics were *danweiren*, who belonged to the national *danwei* personnel system (Yan, 2010).

Since the implementation of current academic employment policy in 1986, a symbol of the end of *danwei* era (1949-1986) of Chinese HE system, the relationship between academics and university has begun to shift from the patronage relationship in *danwei* system to the contractual employment relationship (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). Chinese academics began to change from civil servants to a group of professionals with a certain skills in academic area and human resources in free academic market, who are capable of performing research, teaching and social service, and earning their livings by

doing that (C. Wang & Chen, 2014). In other words, Chinese academic profession in modern HE system has formally come into being since 1986.

Today, Chinese academic profession has developed its own idiosyncratic characteristics (Yan & Chen, 2008). Researchers believe academic profession in modern China is developing under the influence of both traditional Chinese culture, especially the *danwei* culture, and the western influence, especially the corporate culture and the introduction of market (Chen, 2003; C. Wang & Chen, 2014; Y. X. Zhang, 2012).

With the introduction of market force into HE system, the Chinese HE system has been under reform since 1978, characterized with a shift from centralization to decentralization, diversification of funding sources, the establishment of an increasingly efficient educational, a devolution of authority in human resources from government to universities, and privatization in educational provision (Cai Y. Z., 2012; Yan, 2010). As the characteristics of the academic profession are shaped by its social contexts (Yan, 2010), academic profession in China has also been under transformation in the past three decades under the impact of market force. Market force has permeated in the development of academic profession in China (Yan, 2010).

First, in terms of quantitative issues, the Chinese higher education system has gone through different phases of over- and under-supply with academics in the recent years as there is a period of overstaffing from 1949 to 1990s, and an understaffing period since the massification of higher education from 1998 onwards. The rigid academic personnel system in *danwei* era had resulted in a serious problem of overstaffing, while the university mergers in 1990s made the situation even worse (Chen, 2003). In 1990s, many academics were resigned or appointed to administrative positions due to lack of posts for academics in newly merged universities, which led to a more severe problem of overstaffing of administrators and a problem of understaffing of competent academics (Chen, 2003). The problem of understaffing of academics became more explicit after the massification of higher education. With massification of higher education and expansion of enrollment, increasing students' population in HE system called for more academics to take up jobs in academia for teaching and research (Shi, 2011). In order to meet this demand, the population of academics has been increased since then (Shi, 2011). From 1999 to 2012, the population of academics in universities has increased from 0.4 million to 1.4 million (MoE, 1999; MoE, 2013).

Second, academics have been evolving from '*danweiren*' to '*academic workers*'. The difference between these two types of academic employees is that '*danweirens*' are *danwei* men in a planned system, featured with a unified identity, a similar and average income and a limited scope of activities, while '*academic workers*' are social men in a market-based system, characterized with a more independent identity, a diversified income, more varied income levels, a broader scope of activities (Yan, 2010). The reform in academic recruitment and promotion system has been shaking the patronage relationship between university and academics, which is left by the *danwei* culture. Academics are recruited by institutions through contractual agreements, and establish a type of employment relationship with universities (Zhang, 2012). The faculty salary shifts from rank-based fixed salary, which is decided by the state, to rank-based fixed salary plus rating-based salary, performance-based salary and allowance (Ma & Wen, 2012; Rumbley, Pacheco, & Altbach, 2008; Yan, 2010).

Third, greater academic autonomy and more academic freedom are given to academics. With the trend of de-administration and decentralization, universities have greater autonomy in the university governance, including autonomy in the appointive domain of academics (Bo & Wang, 2012; Yang, Vidovich, & Currie, 2007), and meanwhile academics have more freedom in curricular design and choices of research, and even some additional financial independence from government in the form of private funds (Yang et al., 2007). Academics can decide curriculum design and research areas on their own, except for political education and some sensitive areas of research (Yang et al., 2007). A shift in the nature of academic autonomy, which moving towards greater procedural, but narrower sustainable autonomy, can be discerned (Yang et al., 2007).

Fourth, research has been prioritized among different academic activities. Currently, academics accord greater importance to research than that to teaching (L. L. Li, Lai, & Lo, 2013). Qualification of research output has been a trend over past decade. The introduction of market mechanism and the decrease of government funding push academics to compete for research funds and research project for themselves. Thus competing for research projects has become a major part of academic work life (Lai, 2013). Currently, academics at renowned universities usually work for national research projects related to government policies, whilst academics at the local university work with the market by conducting applied research for enterprises (Lai, 2013). The internationalization of

Chinese HE system, especially the adoption of American criteria in measuring research output, which is interpreted as academics being encouraged to increase publications in international citation indices, leads to an increase of international publications in the last decade (Flowerdrew & Li, 2009).

Educational reforms under western influence has brought changes to Chinese academic profession; however, the old forces of central planning and official interference, bureaucratic control and *danwei* culture still exerts great effects on the Chinese academic profession (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). Centralization is one imprint of the old forces (Chen, 2003). In academic community in China, very few initiatives are made from the bottom up, and usually no serious investigation among academics has been conducted before the central government issues a top-down national policy decision (Chen, 2003). Take university academic recruitment and promotion system as an example, although the Ministry of Education has been decentralizing the authority of hiring and promoting academics to universities since 1980s, the current academic recruitment and promotion system in all institutions of various types have more or less followed a similar pattern, which was designed by the Ministry of Education and used by the prestigious research universities (Chen, 2003). The legacy of central planning and government control has not only reflected in academic recruitment and promotion system, but also in the state-controlled doctoral supervisors' appointment system, and the interference of officialdom and the neglect of students' voice in academic promotion process (Chen, 2003).

Inbreeding is another imprint of old forces (Chen, 2003; C. Wang & Chen, 2014; Yan & Chen, 2008). Yan & Chen's (2008) study shows that Chinese academic profession is characterized with homogenous educational backgrounds and stagnation. Chinese academics have stronger loyalty to the institution rather than to the discipline (Yan & Chen, 2008). These characteristics manifest the problem of inbreeding in academic profession, which is closely related to the structure of Chinese traditional society. The Chinese traditional society have left at least two legacies in the developmental path of academic profession (Wang & Chen, 2014): one is the preserve of normative knowledge and the moral values orientation, the other is the hierarchical social framework with differentiate orders which is formed based on *guanxi* (social connection). When the legacies of traditional Chinese society together with the specialties of *danwei* culture had impact on the development of academic profession in *danwei* era, a hierarchic, *guanxi*-based, moral values



oriented, self-support, closed academic community, which consisted of many small *guanxi*-based ‘social groups’ at different echelons, was formed (C. Wang & Chen, 2014; Y. X. Zhang, 2012). *Guanxi* was usually interpreted as inbreeding relationship and supervision relationship (also called *shimen*), when it comes to the area of academic profession. ‘Social groups’ were formed according to the differentiation of *guanxis* of academics in the community (C. Wang & Chen, 2014; Y. X. Zhang, 2012). *Shimen* is a special form of social groups in Chinese universities, which are formed based on supervisor-ship. Usually a *shimen* consists of a supervisor, master students and doctoral students who are studying in university under the supervision of the supervisor, and master’s and doctoral graduates who have once studied under the supervision of the supervisor. In most Chinese universities, a *shimen* is a big family for the *shimen* members. *Shimen* members not only have close relationship with each other within a *shimen*, but also share strong belongingness towards the *shimen*. The influence of *guanxi* and ‘social groups’, in particular supervisor-ship and *shimen*, in academic profession can still be observed in the current status of academic profession, not only in the inbreeding phenomenon of academics recruitment and promotion, but also in the formation of research groups in universities (C. Wang & Chen, 2014; Y. X. Zhang, 2012). Reforms have been changing academic profession in China, but the marks of old forces are still there (Y. X. Zhang, 2012). For example, Interviewee M1 stated out the ‘*danwei*’ culture has strong influenced on the personnel system in B University. Under the influence, the commitment to the university has been highly valued in B University (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013).

## 2.2 Chinese university academic promotion system

### Reforms in Chinese academic promotion system

The academic promotion system in Chinese universities has been under reform since the founding of the country (Mao & Cai, 2010). According to Mao & Cai’s (2010) analysis, the university academic promotion system in China has gone through three different developmental stages:

First stage (1949-1966) politics-oriented stage: in this stage, the criteria of evaluating academics were mainly their political performance instead of academic performance. Academics were regarded as civil servants, and got appointed to certain posts, which was closely linked to certain academic rank, by the government. There was no fixed limitation of the number of academics of certain academic rank. In other words, because everything was strictly regulated by the government, there was no competition for academic promotion. Once academics got appointed, the appointment was permanent, so were the relevant remunerations. In the politics-oriented

stage, the university academic promotion system was highly government-controlled, and academic performance was overwhelmed by non-academic performance when evaluating and appointing an academic. From 1967 to 1977, because of the Cultural Revolution, the development of university academic promotion system was halted for ten years.

Second stage (1978-1985) transformation stage: after the Cultural Revolution, the state tried to retrieve the university academic promotion system in the politics-oriented stage, but because of certain financial issues, the central government had to loosen its control on the academic promotion system. In this stage, the emphasis on political performance was decreased with the introduction of market-oriented elements into HE system. Meanwhile, the central government began to decentralize its authority of appointment of academics to the provincial governments. Many problems raised in this stage, e.g. the unclear promotion criteria, un-correspondent salary and unequal consideration about different political identities, which led to the halt of the reform in the academic promotion system again in 1983. From 1983 to 1985, the reform of academic promotion system was under heated discussion and new reform policies were called on.

Third stage (1986-current) market-oriented stage: The issue of 'Pioneering regulations of Academic Promotion System in Higher Education' ('Pioneering Regulation 1986') (MoE, 1986b) and the 'Suggestions for the Implementation of 'Pioneering regulations of Academic Promotion System in Higher Education''('Suggestions 1986') (MoE, 1986c) in 1986 symbolized the beginning of the new stage. Since then, the market-oriented mechanism has been introduced into the university academic promotion system officially. Mao & Cai (2010) maintained that the professionalism of academic work in this stage has been strengthened, and meanwhile the emphasis on political identity has been declining gradually. As market-oriented elements, competition and incentive mechanism are obviously witnessed in university faculty system, academics are evaluated and promoted based on their academic performance and become contracted employees of universities (Mao & Cai, 2010).

Decentralization of the authority of academic promotion, from state to universities as well as from the central government (the Ministry of Education (MoE)) to provincial governments, is the main theme of reform in this stage. The decentralization of autonomy of academic promotion has started in the transformation stage and continued until the present. In 1986, through issuing the

‘Constitutions of Granting Autonomy of Academic Promotion to Universities’ (‘Constitutions 1986’) under the guidance of ‘Pioneering Regulations 1986’, the MoE clearly identified the conditions and procedures of gaining autonomy of academic promotion for HEIs, and the related responsibilities for HEIs (MoE, 1986a). According to the ‘Constitutions 1986’, universities which meet the requirement announced by the MoE can apply to the MoE for the authority of academic promotion. The MoE would review the qualifications of applicant universities and decide whether to grant them the authority or not. Universities which are granted with the authority of academic promotion have the decision-making power in promoting academics, but still need to report to the MoE for confirmation. Academics within these universities can apply for academic promotion to their university human resources offices, while others need to submit application to the provincial government or the MoE. Under the instruction of the ‘Constitutions 1986’, the first two rounds of granting authority of academic promotion to HEIs were carried out in 1986 and 1988 (MoE, 1994). In order to further regulate the decentralization of autonomy of academic promotion, the MoE proposed in 1994 that a check and monitor system should be developed to assure the qualification of authorized HEIs (MoE, 1994). By 2012, 175 HEIs have been granted the authority of promoting full professors and associate professors, and 123 HEIs have been granted the authority of promoting associate professors (MoE, 2012b). Almost at the same time in 2012, the MoE announced to decentralize the decision-making power of granting the authority of promoting associate professors to the provincial governments (MoE, 2012a). From 2013 on, universities apply to the provincial governments for granting the authority of promoting associate professors. Provincial governments determine the grant of authority of promoting associate professors for HEIs and report to the MoE at the end of each year (MoE, 2012a).

In the meantime (1986-present), the national policy about evaluating and promoting academics in universities has not developed a lot. After the issue of the two fundamental documents in 1986, only one policy document was co-issued by the Chinese Teachers Committee and the National Human Resource Office in 1991, to support the implementation of the ‘Pioneering Regulation 1986’ and the ‘Suggestions 1986’ and meanwhile to emphasize the guidance of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the importance of ideology (Chinese Teachers Committee & Chinese National Human Resource Office, 1991). The ‘Pioneering Regulation 1986’ and ‘Suggestions 1986’ have laid the foundation for the development of current academic promotion system in universities, and even after about thirty years’ development, they are still relevant today. They are regarded as the

national guideline for universities to develop their own academic promotion system within universities. Zhang (2013) pointed out that currently universities determine their academic evaluation and promotion separately, but that the promotion criteria at the institutional level are largely influenced and determined by the policies developed by regimes at the national level. Through interpreting these two key documents, 'Pioneering Regulation 1986' and 'Suggestions 1986' and other relevant literatures during this period, we can depict a picture of current university academic promotion system in China.

#### Current national academic promotion policy in China

The purpose of formulating and implementing current academic promotion policy is to motivate academics' innovation, to ensure that the three missions of universities (teaching, research and social service) are carried out successfully, to support faculty development, to encourage academic exchange activities and to increase academics' mobility (MoE, 1986b; MoE, 1986c).

There are four levels of academic ranks in academic promotion system: assistant teacher, lecturer, associate professor and full professor (MoE, 1986b). Assistants Teachers in Chinese HE system are different from the teaching assistants or researcher assistants in American system, who are usually performed by doctoral students (Shen, 2011). Shen (2011) pointed out that 'teacher' in 'assistant teacher' in Chinese academic promotion system refers to a broader concept of teachers, that is, academic staff members. They are junior academics in the academic ranking. Thus 'Assistant Teacher' is also called 'junior rank' (in Chinese: *chuji zhicheng*). The definition of other three academic ranks is similar to those in American system or European system. Both 'full professor' and 'associate professor' are regarded as 'senior ranks' (*gaoji zhicheng*), and 'lecturer' is a 'medior rank' (*zhongji zhicheng*). Shen (2011) believed that an academic can only be regarded as having entered into the academic profession as a professional academic, until he or she gets promoted to a 'senior rank'. To differentiate 'full professor' and 'associate professor', 'associate professor' is often called 'vice senior rank' (*fugao*), and 'full professor' is called 'full senior rank' (*zhenggao*). Academics with different academic ranks are required to fulfill different responsibilities. Accordingly, academics inclining to apply for higher academic rank must fulfill the required criteria.

Performance in research, teaching and social service has been taken into account when academics are evaluated and promoted, while other indicators are also considered, such as educational

background, e.g. graduate universities and the highest academic degree of academics, seniority and proficiency of foreign languages, e.g. English (MoE, 1986b; MoE, 1986c). In practice, performance in teaching usually refers to 'the number of courses and students taught, advisees including graduate students, and new courses developed' (Mohrman et al., 2011). Performance in research is evaluated through considering 'information about manuscripts accepted, in press, or published; research grants or awards received; conference papers presented; and performances given' (Mohrman et al., 2011). In recent years, indicators of educational attainments in terms of international rankings, publications of research papers, especially in international indices, such as Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), or the Chinese equivalents and citations, are considered as key performance indicators for Chinese academics (Ma & Wen, 2012; Mohrman et al., 2011). Performance on social service usually is not easy to be quantified and evaluated in practice. For example, producing consultative reports to government agencies can be viewed as an added value of academic performance in terms of social service (Mohrman et al., 2011). In most universities, performance on research is the primary performance indicator for academics (Ma & Wen, 2012; Mohrman et al., 2011).

The numbers of academics to be promoted in every round of academic promotion are determined by a quota system (MoE, 1986b; MoE, 1986c). According to the 'Suggestion 1986', the quota system works in this way (MoE, 1986c): the number or quota for academics to be promoted from one academic rank to another one is determined by a percentile structure of academics' population in the academic ranking, e.g. full professor: associate professor: lecturer: assistant teacher: 30%: 40%: 20%: 10%. Universities predict the percentile structure of academics' population of different academic ranks, and then apply to the government to get approval. For instance, the number of full professors in a university is calculated based on the development of the discipline, the population of associate professors and the qualifications of associate professors. Once the application is approved, the percentile structure of academics with each academic rank is fixed, and can only be changed through the approval of the government. And then in each year, universities calculate the population of academics, compare it to the percentile structure, and decide the quota of academics to be promoted at each level. With the introduction of the quota system, competition has been introduced into academic promotion system.

Regarding the decision-making power of promoting academics for universities, as mentioned before, the government has been trying to decentralize the power since 1986. According to 'Pioneering Regulation 1986' (MoE, 1986b): All universities have the authority to promote or appoint an academic to be assistant teachers; universities with the authority to confer bachelor's degrees have the decision-making power in promoting assistant teachers to lecturers, while for others, the decision-making power lies on provincial governments; Universities, which have been granted the authority of promoting associate professors or full professors have the decision-making power in promoting associate professors or full professors, while for other universities, the provincial governments remain the decision-makers for them.

Based on the analysis above, we can see that with the aim of increasing academic mobility, improving the academic performance of academics and fulfilling the three missions of universities, the current academic promotion system in Chinese HE system, is still relatively strictly state-controlled, but meantime becoming increasingly market-oriented.

### 2.3 Research gap

So far the publications about Chinese academic promotion system are scarce. Some studies discuss the topic, academic promotion system, indirectly, when studying other related topics, such as faculty life, faculty salaries, historical development of academic profession, etc. (Ma & Wen, 2012; Mohrman et al., 2011; Shen, 2007; Shen, 2008; Yan & Chen, 2008; Yan, 2010):

Shen (Shen, 2007; 2008) participated in the 'Changing Academic Profession' (CAP) survey and assessed the current situation and circumstances of the academic profession in China, including academic degrees, salaries, working conditions, job satisfaction, etc. Shen's report (2008) plays a very significant role of the research on academic profession in China. Before her study, there is very few empirical study about Chinese academics. However, though academic career is also one of the 18 aspects included in the study (Shen, 2007), the study only presented a very general picture of academics in China. Besides, the analysis result also faced the questions on sampling, e.g. as the author mentioned, in term of salaries, faculty in the CAP survey report average earnings higher than any sector identified in the national statistics (Shen, 2007).

Yan and Chen (2008) conducted a preliminary and empirical study of China's academic career path resulting from sampling regular HEIs in the Beijing Municipality. The study concluded with findings about Chinese academic profession's idiosyncratic characteristics: Chinese academic profession is characterized with monotonous educational background, stagnation and permanent employment. The main focus of this study is on the academic mobility along career path. Not only the inner-institutional promotion track is discussed, but also inter-institutional promotion, cross-sector academic mobility and cross-discipline mobility are considered. The study also addressed the differentiation of mobility along career paths in different tiers of institutions. But the academic promotion criteria was not the studied subject in this study.

Yan (2010) elaborated the social and historical characteristics of the academic profession in China from an institutional perspective, including the historical development of academic promotion system. Nevertheless, the study mainly focused on demonstrating the development of academic profession in China along with the evolution of university organization. The study more focuses on institutional level rather than individual level.

Mohrman et al.(2011) illustrated an overview of faculty life in Chinese university, covering the aspects of faculty demographics, governance, faculty recruitment, faculty salary, faculty evaluation and promotion, faculty-administration relationship, and the influence of market on faculty. This paper covered the aspect of faculty promotion, and also described the performance indicators to evaluate academics, though putting them in the context of annual evaluation. Nevertheless, the performance indicators in the faculty annual evaluation system, actually is the same as that in the promotion system. The paper also stated that evaluating academics based on quantified performance indicators put pressure on academics, especially young academics. However, the study in this paper was very descriptive. Moreover, the performance indicators in term of social service were not included.

Ma and Wen (2012) conducted a case study of a Chinese teaching-oriented university to assess the current situation of Chinese salaries and remuneration, hiring practices, contracts and promotion. The differences of salaries according to different ranks and levels are explored in the case university. The paper covered the illustration of the academic promotion and academic career paths since the academics' salaries were closely related to academic ranks. However, in the paper the authors

identified the academic ranks to only include assistant professors, associate professors and full professors, but left out 'lecturer', which is mis-leading for readers. The whole study was also very descriptive.

In the latest publications, some studies directly addressed the issue of academic promotion system (Gonzalez, Liu, & Shu, 2012; Lai M, 2013; J. N. Zhang, 2013):

Gonzalez et al. (2012) examined the tenure track or regular academic promotion and merit systems at the University of California, Davis, and Wuhan University, with a view towards understanding how they motivate the professoriate and foster creativity, with an aim to provide some lessons for improving the quality of universities and developing world-class university. But, the research only focused on descriptive level of the differences between Chinese and American promotion system. In this study, the impacts of the promotion policy or academics' perceptions are not discussed.

Lai (2013) employed a qualitative method to investigate the academic work in a regional university and a key university in China, collected the academics' perception of the employment reform and the Teaching Quality Assessment of Undergraduate-education Project (TQAUP) and analyzed the effects of employment reform together with TQAUP on academics' productivity in research and teaching. There are three major findings in her study: 1) the increased pressure to publish has a negative effect on academic culture. 2) Though both the key university and regional university are under research pressure, there are differences between key universities and regional universities. 3) Requirement for teaching productivity in the new employment system and the TQAUP together lead to further restrictions on teaching. Lai studied the effects of the performance-based employment reform; however, the study mainly focused on the effects of employment reform on research productivity, and the effects on teaching productivity was discussed under the impact of TQAUP. Furthermore, the performance-based and contracted employment reform is a broader concept than academic promotion policy, including many other policies related to academics' employment status.

Zhang (2013) did a qualitative study of a university faculty in China, identified the sources of institutional promotion criteria, and illustrated the experiences of faculty members with these criteria and their perceptions of them. The analysis result suggested that though universities developed their own promotion system, the promotion criteria at the institutional level were largely



influenced and determined by the policies that are developed by regimes at the national level. The study also explicated how faculty members experience, perceive or even reconstitute the promotion criteria for teaching and research in their mundane workday activities and duties. Nevertheless, the main focus in this study is academics' action towards the promotion criteria, e.g. conforming or resisting.

In terms of methodological approaches, based on the analysis of these scarce and key literature, researchers tended to use qualitative method rather than quantitative method to study the topic, and most researchers preferred to conduct empirical studies.

Although we have gained some knowledge on and insight of the impact of academic promotion policy, there are considerable gaps in our understanding. Existed research has too a limited extent increased our understanding of how the current academic promotion policy have impact on academic work in Chinese universities. We believe much can be learned from an analysis of the impact of the academic promotion policy in Chinese universities through the theoretical lenses of new institutional theory (Scott, 2008). Hence, an empirical study with the employment of new institutional theory concerning the research question 'how do the policies and practices of current university academic promotion influence academic work in China's context?' is carried out, and elaborated in this thesis. This study will help us increase our scholarly understanding of the impact of performance-based management, especially the performance-based academic promotion policy, on academic work, by which we can contribute to knowledge pool.

The focuses of past researches have not been sufficiently contextualized in the organizational settings in which academic promotion takes place. Actually, so far studies of higher education governance rooted on organizational sociology are rare (Huisman, 2009). Not many researches have been, but actually should be, conducted to align the theme of higher education governance with the appropriate disciplines, e.g. organizational sociology (Huisman, 2009). This study will link the issue of performance-based management, one key aspect of higher education governance, to the organizational sociology through using new institutional theory to understand the impacts of the academic promotion policy, which will enrich the research profile in this area. This approach is believed to be one aspect of the novelty of the study as well as the contribution to the current knowledge pool.

### 3. Theory

In order to better understand how the academic promotion policy influences academic work, new institutional theory is used as to develop the analytical framework in the study. Regarding theories to research on the relationship between institutional environments and the individuals' behaviors, new institutionalism and rational choice approaches are two options that researchers usually use. One of the most significant differences between the rational choice theory and the new institutionalism is that the new institutionalism regards individual choices are influenced by the social context, while the rational choice theory believe individuals' actions are fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the possible costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do (Kamel, 2009) . In the view of Kamel (2009), the rational choice theory becomes a failure when it claims to act as a hegemonic theory and to explain all social behavior of man. There are also criticisms on the new institutionalism. Kamel (2009) thought that the new institutionalism does not provide clear distinctions between institutions and norms in general, and it can help understand the organizational changes, but fails to explain organizational stability. Nevertheless, in this study, considering the idiosyncratic characteristics of Chinese academics (being stagnant, and closely depend on HEIs, etc.(Yan & Chen, 2008)), as well as the characteristics of Chinese HE system (collectivism and strong state regulation, etc.), the new institutionalism is more appropriate to be used as the theoretical approach. University academic staff can be seen as individuals in the institution, the university as an institution, and the university environment as the institutional environment for the university staff.

#### 3.1 Institutions and social actions

In order to better understand the relationship between academic work and the institutional environment which they are in, the author employs Scott's (Scott, 2008; 2010) framework of institutions as the theoretical framework. Scott (2008) proposed that institutions are comprised of three pillars, which are regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars, and are conveyed by various types of vehicles or 'carriers', consisting of symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artifacts.

Pillars refer to elements which make up or support institutions (Scott, 2008). Regulative pillar is related to regulatory process, which involves 'the capacity to establish rules, inspect others' conformity to them, and, as necessary, manipulate sanctions, rewards or punishments—in an

attempt to influence future behavior.’ (Scott, 2008, p. 52). Scott (2008) pointed out force, sanctions, and expedience responses are central elements of the regulative pillars, but often exist in the form of rules. Normative pillars “include values and norms’, which ‘introduce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension’ (Scott, 2008, p.55) into institutions. According to Scott (2008), values are ‘conceptions of the preferred or the desirable, together with the construction of standards to which existing structures or behaviors can be compared’ (p.54), and ‘norms specify how things should be done.’ (p. 55). Cultural-cognitive pillars are ‘the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made’ (Scott, 2008, p.57). ‘The shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality’ refers to social actors’ subjective interpretation of the objective conditions, which emphasizes the cognitive dimension of the institutional element (Scott, 2008). Institutionalists who emphasize the cognitive dimensions of human existence believe the mediation between the external world of stimuli and the response of the individual organism is a collection of internationalized symbolic representations of the world, which is the meanings we attribute to objects and activities (Scott, 2008). Scott (2008) proposed that ‘internal (cognitive) interpretive processes are shaped by ‘external’ cultural frameworks’ (p.57), and cultural categories can be regarded as the cognitive containers in which social interests are interpreted.

Regarding the four carriers, according to Scott (2008): symbolic systems refers to the guidelines for human activities and social relations in institutional environment. Symbolic systems of institutions include the ‘full range of rules, values and norms, classifications, representations, frames, schemas, prototypes, and scripts used to guide behavior’ (p.80); relational systems are ‘carriers that rely on patterned interactions connected to networks of social positions’ (p. 81); routines refer to ‘carriers that rely on patterned actions that reflect the tacit knowledge of actors’ (p. 82); artifacts are carriers that are created by human ingenuity to assist in the performance of various tasks and are embodied in technical and symbolic elements. Scott (2008) cross-classified the four carriers together with three pillars and proposed the framework of institutional pillars and carriers (see Table 1). Because the study in this thesis is mainly focusing on the impact of the current academic promotion policy on academic work, in other words, the effects of policy guidelines on academics’ activities, which is closely related to the symbolic systems of institutional pillars, the researcher focuses on symbolic systems of the three pillars in the analysis. As Table 1 shows, regulative symbolic systems refer to rules, laws and conventions that provide guidelines for actors; normative symbolic systems are

values and expectation that guide behaviors; cultural-cognitive symbolic systems are common categories, distinctions and typifications that shape perceptions and interpretation, which affect actors' evaluation, judgments, predictions and inferences (Scott, 2008).

	Pillars		
	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-cognitive
Symbolic systems	Rules Laws	Values Expectation	Categories Typifications Schema
Relational systems	Governance systems Power systems	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism Identities
Routines	Protocols Standard operating procedures	Jobs Roles Obedience to duty	Scripts
Artifacts	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meeting conventions, standards	Objects processing symbolic value

*Table 1 Institutional pillars and symbolic systems (Scott, 2008, p. 79)*

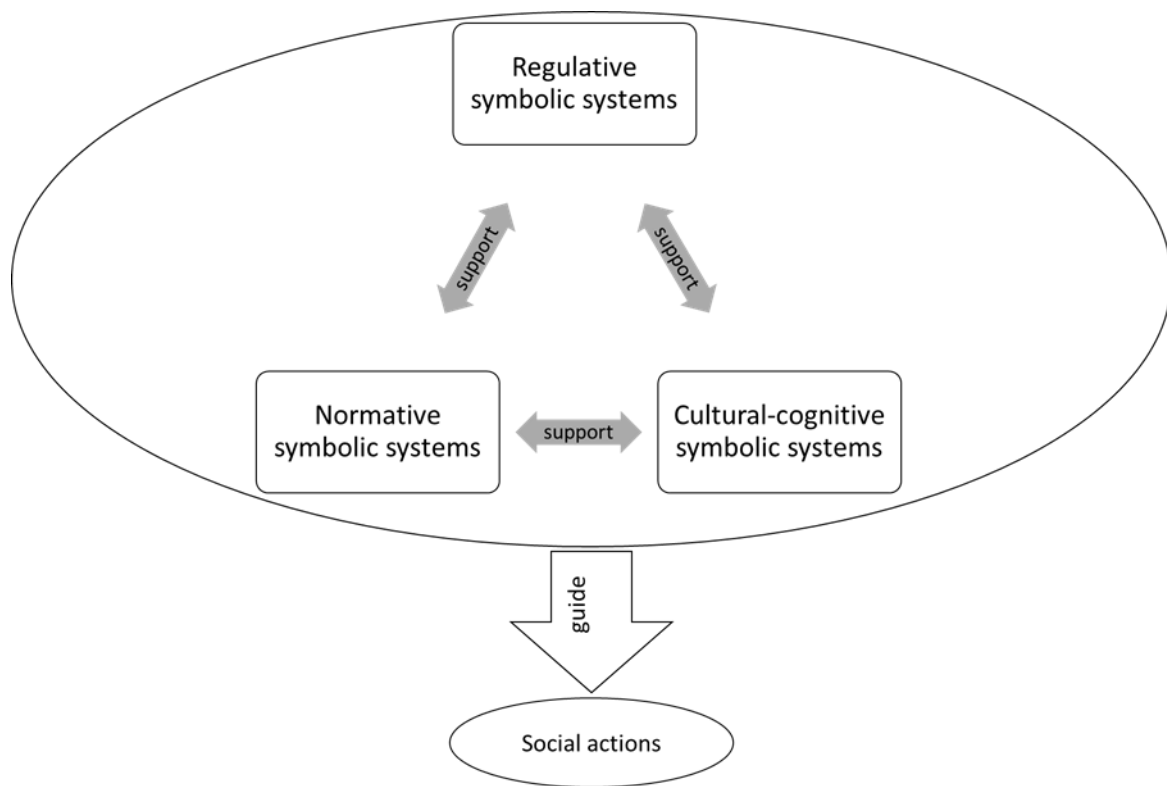
According to Scott (2008), symbolic systems of pillars serve as guidelines for social actors' actions. Rules, norms or expectations, beliefs, and resources provide the situational environments that enter into individual decision-makings and actions (Scott, 2008). Institutionalists, who are more likely to view institutions primarily as regulative framework, believe that actors construct institutions to deal with collective action problems—to regulate their own and others' behaviors—and they respond to institutions because the regulations are backed by incentives and sanctions (Scott, 2010). Institutionalists, who see institutions resting primarily on a normative pillar, assume that social behavior are grounded in a social context and oriented by a moral framework that takes into account one's relations and obligations to others in the situation, and that actors in institutions are social persons who care deeply about their relations to others and adherence to the guidelines provided

by their own identity (Scott, 2010). Cultural-cognitive theorists emphasize that all decisions and choices are socially constructed models, assumptions and schemas, that the social action is always grounded in social contexts that specify valued ends and appropriate means, and that cultural-cognitive elements provide vital templates for framing individual perceptions and decisions (Scott, 2010).

The three pillars (regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive pillars) can provide an independent guidelines for social actions and account for social behaviors independently. Scott (2008) explained that regulative pillars require social actors to conform to rules through coercion; normative pillars evoke strong emotions, such as guilty or honor, thus inducing actors to comply with prevailing norms; compliance with cultural-cognitive guidelines occurs when the guided social actions are inconceivable and social actors take the cultural-cognitively supported actions for granted as 'the way we do these things' (Scott, 2008). Hence, the symbolic systems of three pillars can guide social actions independently. However, it is often the case that they shape social actions in varying combinations (Scott, 2010) with one or another as the predominant force. Scott (2008) observed that in a stable, social system, practice or social actions are persistent because they are backed by authority, normatively endorsed and taken for granted. When three pillars are aligned, the strength of their combined forces would be formidable (Scott, 2008), and the guided actions will persist. Figure 1 shows the relations between symbolic systems of three pillars and social actions in a stable system. In a stable system, three pillars are aligned, supporting each other, and symbolic systems of the three pillars provide the same guidelines for social actions and decision-making.

Social actions can persist and be enforced when regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars are aligned and provide the same guidelines. If one pillar changes, it will break the alliance of three pillars and the stability of the institution, and bring changes of the social system. Compared with another two pillars, the regulative pillar is more formalized, more explicit and more easily planned and strategically manipulated (Scott, 2010), which makes it become a breakthrough if one would like to break the alliance of three pillars and change the current social system and social actions. When the regulative elements change, they will provide a new guideline for social actors for a certain type of social action. For sure the regulative elements intend to require social actors comply with the new guidelines. However, only if they are supported by the normative and cultural-cognitive elements, the intended effects of regulative elements on social actions, can be realized,

and the regulatively guided actions will persist; otherwise, the regulative guided actions will be superficial and fleeting.



*Figure 1: Symbolic systems of three pillars of institutions and social actions (Scott, 2008; 2010)*

### 3.2 Analytical framework

Based on the framework of three pillars and social actions (see Figure 1), the researcher developed the analytical framework for this study (see Figure 2). As to adopt the theoretical framework, first, terms in the theoretical framework in Figure 1 are 'localized' and interpreted as follows:

Academics are seen as individuals in institutional environment, and institutional environment refers to the university environment here. Academic work, or rather academics' activities, can be interpreted as individuals' actions in the institutional environment. The activities and decision-making of academics to take any actions are guided by the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive symbolic systems of the institutional environment. The symbolic systems of the institution in this study can be understood as the guidelines for academics to conduct activities.

Regulative pillar of the institution includes regulative elements that are relevant to academics work, including policies, rules and regulations at university's and faculty's level. The university academic promotion policy and its practices is one key regulative element that guides academics' activities. The policy guidelines for academics' activities from the university academic promotion policy, which are also the intended effects of the university academic promotion policy, are regarded as the regulative symbolic systems in the institution. Through analyzing the policy and practices of current academic promotion policy in the case and interpreting its intended effects, one can get the idea about the intended regulative symbolic systems (or guidelines) for academic work.

Academics' shared values, norms, and expectations of academic work are regarded as the normative symbolic systems: the shared expectations of academic work refers to how academics are supposed to conduct activities in the academic community; the shared values about academic work means conceptions of preferred behaviors that are shared by academics; norms in the academic community specify how academic work should be carried out. To be more specific, in this study the normative symbolic systems are interpreted to be the normative expectations of how academics are supposed to conduct activities as to pursue the shared values in the case. The expectations of academics work are usually subtle, and they might be difficult to be observed and concluded in a short time. Nevertheless, from academics' perceptions about the expected activities that they are supposed to do, we can learn the normative expectations of academic work.

Academics' internalized perceptions of academic work and conceptions of academic promotion are seen as the cultural-cognitive symbolic systems to guide academics' activities. The analysis of insight of cultural-cognitive pillar in this study places more focus on the cognitive perspective. However, academics' perceptions of academic work are shaped by the common categories, typifications and schema of academic work in the academic community. As the cognitive perspective, a result of internal interpretive processes, is shaped by the cultural perspective, external cultural framework (Scott, 2008), it is also possible to mainly focus on the cognitive dimension while we can get to know the cultural-cognitive perspective.

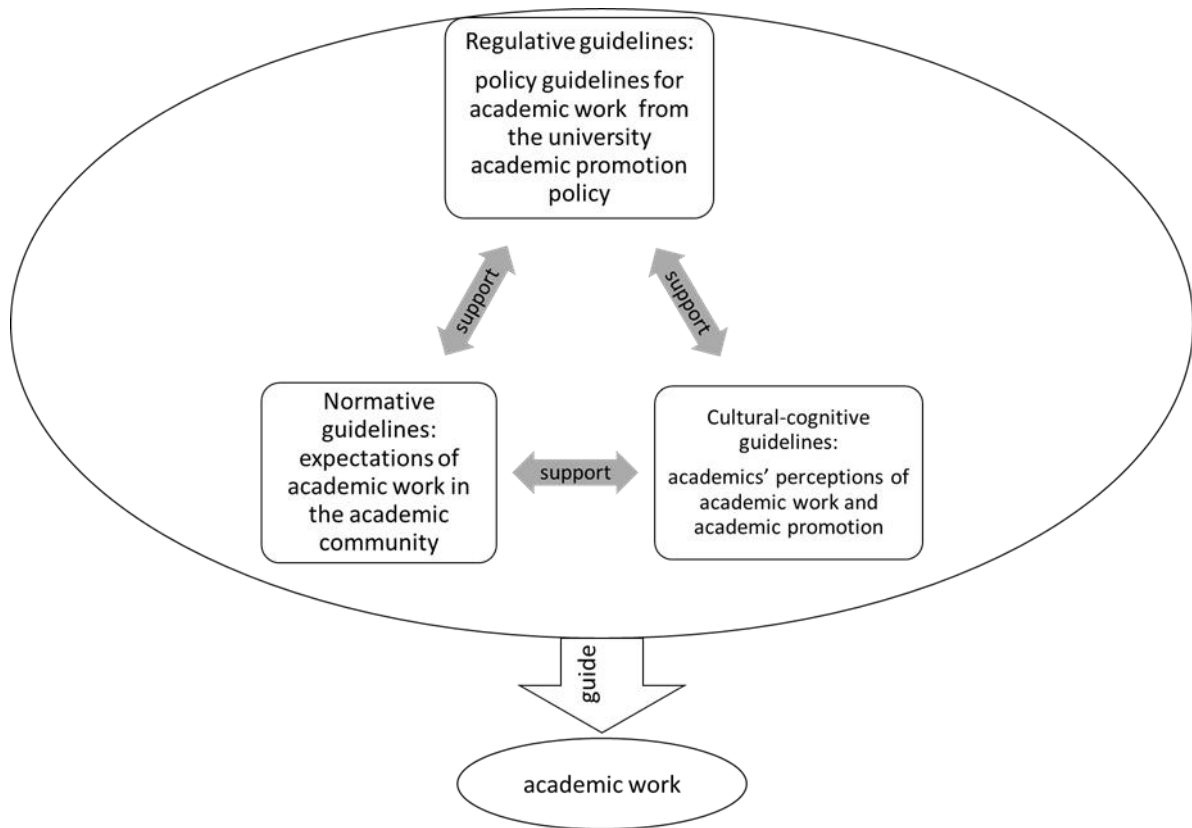
The basic assumption in this study is that the university academic promotion policy provides the regulative guidelines for academics to conduct activities. This assumption is verified later through interviewing academics about their opinions about the effects of academic promotion policy on

their activities in general. All the interviewees, including academics and university managers, regarded the university academic promotion policy and the practices of the policy as a guideline for academics to conduct activities. These regulative guidelines require academics comply with the academic promotion policy and conduct some certain types of activities which are guided by the policy. However, besides regulative guidelines, there are also normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines for academic work in the academic community. Normative guidelines, that is, the expectations of academic work in the academic community, provide powerful inducement for academics to comply with prevailing norms through normative power. Cultural-cognitive guidelines from academics' perceptions of academic work and conception of academic promotion, affect academics' activities through mimetic power which make academics align themselves with prevailing cultural belief of academic work. Compared with the policy guidelines, the normative guidelines and cultural-cognitive guidelines have impact on academics' actions in a more implicit way. Nevertheless, they might have deeper influence. The policy guidelines, expectations of academic work, academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion can have impact on academics' activities independently, but in fact, they can also be interconnected and may affect the others. As what has been mentioned before, social actions persist only if they are guided by regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive symbolic systems together (see Figure 1). Supposed the intended effects of the academic promotion policy have been fully realized, which means academics comply with the regulative guidelines for academic work to conduct activities, the regulative guidelines should be aligned with guidelines from other two pillars. They should act as a combined force to guide academics' activities (see Figure 2).

As Figure 2 shows, the academic promotion policy, the normative expectations of academic work, and academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion provide guidelines for academic work. As mentioned before, symbolic systems of the three pillars can exert effects on social action independently, but very often they work together as a combined force. Only if the symbolic systems of the three pillars support each other, the compliance with regulative guidelines will persist. Hence, if the policy makers intend to encourage academics to comply with the guidelines for academic work from the current academic promotion policy, they should make sure the intended regulative guidelines from the current academic promotion policy are aligned with not only the normative guidelines from the expectations of academic work but also the cultural-



cognitive guidelines for academic work from academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion.



*Figure 2 Regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines for academic work*

Only if a type of academic activity is not only encouraged by the regulative guidelines, but also normatively expected and meanwhile culturally supported in the institution, this type of academic activity will persist. For instance, the academic promotion policy intends to guide academics to conduct a certain academic activity, let's call it 'Activity A'. Academics might comply with the policy and do 'Activity A' if the coercive power of the policy is very strong. However, only if academics think they are supposed to do 'Activity A' in their academic community and their internal perceptions of 'Activity A' has become orthodox and they take 'academics do Activity A' for granted, they will continue doing 'Activity A'. In other words, if all the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars are aligned and give the same guidelines to academics to carry out a type of activity, this activity will persist. Otherwise, the activity will be fleeting and easy to be changed. When university policy-makers design the university academic promotion policy, they have their intention

to guide academics' activities. Policy-makers may hope the intended effects of the policy can be fully realized, which means academics are all doing activities exactly following the regulative guidelines; however, it is often the case that policies can only have part of their intention realized. Academics might not always comply with policies, and sometimes even they comply with the policies at the beginning, but the regulatively guided activities do not persist. Meanwhile some unintended effects might show up. The reason why these will happen is that at some point the expectations of academic work, and academics' perception of academic work and academic promotion have some other guidelines (different from the regulative guidelines) for academics to take actions. If the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines for academic work are not aligned and support each other, as Figure 2 shows, academics will not fully comply with the regulative guidelines. At least the compliance will not be persistent.

As this study is to understand how the current university academic promotion policy influences academic work, referring to academics' activities of research, teaching and social service, based on the analytical framework proposed above, the guideline for academics' activities from the academic promotion policy, the expectations of academic work, and the academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion should be analyzed, and so should be their inter-relations. If they are guiding academics in the same direction, it might imply that the policy guideline has already influenced and changed academic work, and the intended effects of the policy have been realized. In this case, academics will continue doing this type of activity. If the normative guidelines, cultural-cognitive guidelines, and the regulative guidelines are not aligned, which means the normative guidelines from the expectations of academic work and the cultural-cognitive guidelines from the academics' perception of academic are leading academics to conduct activities in the other way, academics might not conduct activities following strictly the policy guidelines. Even though they are doing a certain type of activity at the moment under the coercive power of regulative guidelines, this kind of compliance is not sustainable and this type of activity might change in the future. Through understanding the guidelines of the policies, the expectations of academic work, academics' perceptions of academic work and the inter-relations between these categories of guidelines, we can come to understand in what way and to what extent the academic promotion policy influences academics' activities.

#### 4. Methodology

Case studies are the preferred method when: 1) “how” or “why” questions are being posed, 2) the investigator has little control over events, and 3) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. In the proposed research, the research question is a “how” research question. The researcher has little control over the effects of the policies and practices of university academic promotion, and the focus of the research is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Hence, case study is an appropriate research method for this study.

An important decision is to define what a case in this study is. Ragin (1992) provided a framework for distinguishing four fundamentally different approaches to cases-based research and for defining cases (see Table 2). These approaches are distinguished by two dichotomies in how cases are conceived: 1) whether they are seen as involving empirical units or theoretical constructs and 2) whether these, in turn, are understood as general or specific.

understanding of cases	case conceptions	
	specific (qualitative)	general (quantitative)
as empirical units	1. cases are found	2. Cases are objects
as theoretical constructs	3. cases are made	4. Cases are conventions

*Table 2 Conceptual map for answers to ‘what is a case?’ (Ragin, 1992)*

Ragin (1992) thought to some extent, the second dichotomy overlaps with the qualitative-quantitative divide in social science, and the cases of qualitative research tend to coalesce as specific categories in the course of the research. In this sense, to ask ‘what is a case’ in qualitative and empirical study, the best question to ask is ‘what can be empirical units of this -the research subject- to be found?’. It is always difficult but an important step to define the empirical bounding of an empirical unit. Usually people use bureaucratically derived boundaries, or commonsense assumptions about organizations, but Harper (1992) suggested we can also define the boundary from cultural perspective. The concept ‘community’ is used, because it is more accurately described bundles of cultural expectations than population in a location (Harper, 1992). Hence, a ‘case’ for this study is a community of academics whose activities have been affected by the academic promotion policy, which is found in reality. It can be a community of academics in a university, but also a community of academics in a faculty.

After defining what a case is in the study, the next step is to decide what type of case study designs to be used. There are four types of case study designs: single-case holistic design, single-case embedded design, multiple-case holistic design and multiple-case embedded design (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) identified five rationales for a single case, one of which is that a single case is the representative or typical case. Put it in this study, if we choose single case design, the selected case should represent a typical or representative 'university' among many different 'universities', or a typical or representative 'faculty' among many different 'faculties' in universities. Zhang's (2013) study showed that though the university policy and practices of the policy might be different in each university in China, academics' perceptions of academic activities and academic promotion were found similar in different universities. Hence the research results or the lessons learnt from the single case are assumed to be informative about the experiences of academics in the average universities or faculties. A single case design was selected for this study. Both variants of single case studies, holistic and embedded designs, have their strengths and weaknesses. The holistic design can be selected when no logical subunits can be identified or when the relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic nature (Yin, 2014). Regarding the theory underlying the case study is the institutional theory, which is of a holistic nature, the holistic design was preferred rather than an embedded design.

#### 4.1 Selection of case

The logic of selecting a case for this study is to find a representative or typical case that can represent a commonplace situation of a community of academics in China. Following this logic, an academic community of Faculty E in B University was selected among many cases.

B University is one of the top 100 universities in China. Located in Beijing, the capital city of the country, it is a Chinese key university, well-known for its research on social science and humanity, especially on the disciplines such as education, Chinese literature studies and psychology. Currently there are about 22,000 students in the university, including about 9,000 undergraduate students and 13,000 postgraduate students. Over 8% degree students are international students. The number of staff members in B University is around 3,000 in total, among which 2/3 are academic staff members. About 10% of academic staff members have gained their doctoral degrees overseas. Before, B University positions itself as the national renowned research university in China. In recent

years, under the influence of Chinese government's world-class university policy, B University determines to develop into an international renowned, in other words, world-class university, in the future. So far B University has developed international exchange and cooperation programs with more than 50 universities overseas.

B University has been granted the authority to evaluate and promote full professors and associate professors its own by the Chinese Ministry of Education since 1986. Since then, it has developed its own academic promotion system to promote academics. The Unit of Faculty Management (FM unit) in the university Human Resources Office (HR Office) is the responsible organization to form the policy of academic promotion, and guide the implementation of the policy at faculty's level. Each faculty, has its own HR Office responsible for implementing the university promotion policy under the guidance of the university HR Office. Each faculty implemented the academic promotion policy individually, thus that 'faculty' is the basic unit to carry out academic promotion, where academics are affected directly by the practices and policy of academic promotion. Therefore, a community of academics at faculty's level rather than that at university's level was selected as the case in this study.

The community of academics in Faculty E in University B was selected as the case. The reasons why Faculty E was selected instead of other faculties, are, on one hand, that each faculty implements the academic promotion policy individually but under the same university guidance, which makes the situation in each faculty similar and Faculty E may represent other faculties, on the other, that the researcher has some personal relations with the management in Faculty E as the entry to the research field. It is a very important step to ensure the feasibility and possibility of the research.

Faculty E is one of the biggest faculties in B University. It is also one of the leading institutions in educational field in China. The mission of the Faculty E is to educate future experts in educational field, to provide a platform that facilitates and promotes research and innovation, to house excellent researchers and intellects in educational field, and to serve as a professional training center for teacher education. The vision of Faculty E is to become a leading international institution in the field of education in 21<sup>st</sup> century, and meanwhile to commit itself to the development of University B as a world-class university. Currently, there are 216 academics in Faculty E, consisting of 81 full professors (37%), 73 associate professors (34%) and 62 lecturers (29%). 91% of academics in Faculty

E are doctoral degree's holders, and 17% of them have gained their degrees in universities overseas. Over 42% of academics have international working/study experiences. Until 2013, Faculty E has signed bilateral or multilateral agreement on teaching and research cooperation with more than 30 international institutions. The Committee of Human Resources (HR Committee) in each faculty is the decision-making body of evaluating and promoting academics at faculty's level, consisting of the directors of departments and senior managers in the faculty. Currently, there are 19 members in the HR Committee in Faculty E, 17 full professors and 2 associate professors.

In the latest round of academic promotion in 2013, in Faculty E all together 18 academics were recommended for promotion by their departments, consisting of 10 lecturers and 8 associate professors. In the end, 12 academics got promoted, consisting of 7 lectures and 5 associate professors (See Table 3).

career path results of promotion	from lecturer to associate professor	from associate professor to full professor	total
succeeded	7	5	12
failed	3	3	6
total	10	8	18

*Table 3 Numbers of applicants for academic promotion in 2013*

#### 4.2 Data collection methods

Qualitative researchers use a variety of procedures to confirm their developing insights or hypotheses and to ensure the trustworthiness of the data being gathered, and one important procedure is to use the data triangulation (Ary, Jacob, & Razavieh, 2002). The logic to use the data triangulation is to increase the likelihood that case is being understood from various points of view. Following this logic, multiple sources of data, including documents, literatures and semi-structured interviews were used.

The data of major national academic promotion policy documents in China covering the period since 1986, policy studies of that period, and relevant university and faculty documents in the case

covering the period since 2009, news and existed literatures, which are relevant to the topic, were collected from September 2013 to December 2013.

Interview questions were designed differently for academics, university and faculty policy-makers, and a faculty manager (see Appendix 1 Interview protocol). The key questions for academics were related to academics' personal perceptions of academic activities and conception of academic promotion, and their opinions about the expectations of conducting activities. Policy-makers' interview questions dealt with the current academic promotion policy and rationales for policy-makings, at both the university's and the faculty's level. The interview questions for the faculty manager covered the topic of implementation at the faculty's level, his perceptions of the current promotion policy. The views of policy-makers and managers provide complementary information for the literatures and document. This information was also used to cross check the results of the document analysis. For confidentiality and ethical consideration, all interviewees are anonymous in this study and were labeled with number, e.g. P1, M1, A1. (Policy-maker=P, M=Manager, A=Academic staff member).

Interviews for policy-makers and managers were taken from November to December 2013 in Beijing in China. Contact was established via the introduction of a middle man, the vice dean of Faculty E. 1 university policy-maker (Interviewee P1), 2 faculty policy-makers (Interviewee P2, P3), 1 faculty middle manager (Interviewee M1) were asked if they were willing to participate in the study. All of them agreed to participate in the study. P1 is the director of the FM unit in University B, one of the university policy-makers. P2 is the vice director of HR Office and also the vice chairman of the HR Committee in Faculty E, and meanwhile a full professor. P3 is the assistant of P2, a senior manager in HR Office in Faculty E, who also participated in the policy-making process. M1 is a director of a department in Faculty E, and meanwhile a member of the HR Committee involved in the implementation of academic promotion. M1 is a full professor since 2006. Because the dual identity of M1, a manager in the implementation of academic promotion policy and also an academic staff member (a full professor), his perceptions of academic activities were also collected during interview.

The researcher invited all the 18 applicants (at faculty's level) in the latest round of academic promotion in 2013 in Faculty E to accept interviews via email. 7 (38.9 %) academics accepted the

invitation (labeled as Interviewee A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, and A7). Interview of A6 was carried out on December 17, 2013, through face-to-face communication. The interview of A6 was an unstructured interview, which served as a key step to make preparation for developing the interview protocol. Other interviews of academics were carried out in April 2014 through telephone or email, with the researcher in Tampere, Finland and interviewees in Beijing, China. 5 academics were interviewed via telephone, and one (A3) answered the interview questions through email (see Table 4). Before interviews of these six academics (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7), a pilot interview was conducted through telephone (with the researcher in Tampere, Finland and the interviewee in Beijing, China), as to testify and to further modify the interview protocol. The interviewee of the pilot interview is an assistant teacher in Faculty E, whose opinion was helpful for ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of the interview questions for academics in Faculty E.

career path results of promotion	from lecturer to associate professor	from associate professor to full professor	total
succeeded	3 (A1, A2, A3)	1 (A6)	4
failed	2 (A4, A5)	1 (A7)	3
total	5	2	7

*Table 4 Numbers of academics that have accepted the interview*

Regarding the background of interviewed academics, 6 out of 7 academics are doctoral graduates from B University, and one academic member (A6) has gained his doctoral degree in a university overseas. Actually, among the 18 applicants, 10 are doctoral graduates from B University. Comparing the acceptance rate of B University graduates (6/10) with that of non-B-University graduates (1/8), academics who graduate from B University are more open for interviews. Among the 7 interviewees, 4 (A1, A4, A6, A7) of them have worked/studied in universities overseas for at least one year. Detailed background information of interviewees is shown in the [Appendix 2](#).

Altogether one newly promoted full professor, three newly promoted associate professors, one un-promoted associate professor and two un-promoted lecturers in Faculty E have accepted interviews. The acceptance rate of interview is 39%. More detailed and stratified acceptance rate of interview is shown in Table 5. From this, we can notice that academics in lower academic ranks



are more willing to accept interview than academics in higher academic ranks. Academics who have got promoted are more reluctant to discuss this issue compared to those who have failed.

promotion results of application	from lecturer to associate professor	from associate professor to full professor	total
succeeded	43 %	20 %	33 %
failed	67 %	33 %	50 %
total	50 %	25 %	39 %

*Table 5 Acceptance rate of interview*

Most of the newly promoted full professors refused to accept interviews, saying that they are too busy to do the interview. However, Interviewee A2 offered another reason why full professors are not willing to accept interviews. '(In B University) when academics get promoted to be full professors, they often talk more but do less. Most of them are reluctant to work with students in empirical studies, to make some mistakes or to do something innovative. Or rather, they are not willing to take risks. Instead, they prefer something more secured. For example, based on other people's analysis result, they make some comments or advices. Very few will work with students on research or spend time on students' tutoring.' (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Academics with higher academic ranks are more conservative than academics with lower academic ranks. This might be the reason why most of them refuse to accept interviews.

Academic position in the academic rank and the result of the application for promotion may have impact on academics' perceptions. Considering the range of the interviewees from academics has covered lecturers who did not succeed in the academic promotion application, newly promoted associate professor and full professor, and associate professor who did not succeed in the academic promotion application, the population is enough, and the participants from academics are representative.

A total of 11 interviews were carried out in Chinese, the mother tongue of participants. With the consent of 10 interviewees (except P1), the conversations were recorded and lasted from 40 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the availability of time and saturation of data obtained.

Anonymity was assured. The interview protocol was used in all interviews. Field notes were taken during the interviews and after to record the setting, as well as possible observations about the interview context. After each interview, the researcher recorded her self-reflection of the interview, including her impression of the interviewees and interview, her self-evaluation of her interview performance, and suggestions for improvement in future interviews. Interview records were transcribed verbatim, and the transcriptions were translated into English when citations were needed. The interview data was complemented with information drawn from observations, field notes and gathered policy documents.

#### 4.3 Data analysis procedures

Data analysis involves 'reducing and organizing the data, synthesizing, searching for significant patterns, and discovering what is important' (Ary et al., 2002). Following Ary et al's (Ary et al., 2002) suggestions for data analysis, the researcher carried out the data analysis procedures in three stages: organizing the data, summarizing the data and interpreting the data.

First, organizing the data: Coding was used to organize the data. The code categories were derived both from the interview protocol and the analytical framework. The field notes, transcripts and other qualitative data were coded and categorized. The researcher read all the data carefully, marked each unit (paragraph or sentences) with an appropriate code by using marginal labels. After all the data were coded, the researcher placed all paragraphs or sentences with the same coding categories together, by cutting with scissors according to the codes and putting materials with alike codes together in a marked envelope. The constant comparative method was used to categorize data and further improve the coding categories. The researcher examined each new units of meaning to determine its distinctive characteristics, and then compared existed categories and grouped them with similar categories. If there were no similar units of meaning, a new category was formed.

Second, summarizing the data: the researcher examined all entries with the same code, merged these categories into patterns by finding links and connections between categories, and made some statements about relationships of categories in the data.

Third, interpreting the data: the researcher made generalizations based on the connections between categories, and evaluated the plausibility of some hypotheses that had evolved during the analysis.

#### 4.4 Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability

Credibility in qualitative study, which is usually referred to construct validity and internal validity in quantitative study, concerns the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings. There are several methods to enhance the credibility of qualitative study, recommended by (Ary et al., 2002) and (Yin, 2014), such as using multiple sources of evidence, doing pattern matching, establishing chains of evidence, etc. In regard to enhancing the construct validity, data triangulation and methods triangulation in the process of data collection were used in the study, and provided the evidence of construct validity based on structural corroboration (Ary et al., 2002). The researcher also used transcription verbatim to help readers experience the interviewees' world, which served as the evidence of internal validity based on referential adequacy (Ary et al., 2002). The transcription of interview data is in Chinese originally and translated into English by the researcher. As to ensure the authenticity of the translation of transcriptions, an outsider of the research, a former colleague of the researcher, who is an English teacher in a Chinese University, was invited to check the translation and ensured they were correct. By doing pattern matching in data analysis procedure, the researcher enhanced the internal validity through providing evidence based on theoretical adequacy. The researcher kept doing self-reflection during the whole research process and made a log of research, and the reflexivity enhanced the internal validity of the research and helped control the researcher bias.

Transferability, which is called 'external validity' in quantitative study, means the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups (Ary et al., 2002). The selection of single case design is usually regarded as a threat to transferability. However, one should be aware that the analogy of generation to samples and universes does not apply for that of cases studies (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) believed the generation to samples means statistical generalization, while the generation to case studies deals with analytical generalization. In analytical generalization, a researcher tries to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (Yin, 2014). To some extent, the transferability of this study was enhanced through the use of new institutional theory in the development of the analytical framework for the study as well as in the process of the data collection and analysis.

Dependability in qualitative study, or reliability in quantitative study, deals with the consistency of behavior, or the extent to which the data and findings would be similar if the research were replicated. The dependability of this study was established through employing data and methods triangulation and using the audit trails (Ary et al., 2002), e.g. a thorough log of research, detailed field notes, interview protocol, interview transcripts verbatim, and descriptive material that can be reviewed by other people.

Conformability or neutrality in qualitative study deals with the extent to which the research is free of bias in the procedures and the interpretation of results. The conformability of this study was established through audit trails, triangulation, and reflexivity (Ary et al., 2002) which have been explained already previously.

#### 4.5 Limitation

Due to the limited period of the study (2013-2014) and opting for its feasibility, the study was limited to only one case single case: a community of academics in one faculty in a research university in China. Discipline base and the sense of institutional commitment of academics might have impact on the characteristics of academic profession (Clark, 1987), thus affecting academics' perceptions and selections of responses (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This limitation is taken into consideration in the analysis. Nevertheless, as what has been mentioned in section 4.4, a case study did not aim at statistical generation. This study aims at an in-depth study of how academic work is affected by the current academic promotion policy. Interviews are a primary source of information for the in-depth studies, which are complemented with other primary sources of evidence, such as Chinese state policy documents, university policy and university documents, and faculty documents.

The scarcity of information from full professor participants might be another limitation. The response from full professors were not as the expectation beforehand. Only one full professor (A6) accepted the interview, which was taken in the preparation stage of the research. Because of the limitation of time, a follow-up interview was not successfully scheduled later when the interview protocol was developed. Academic ranks and the result of promotion may have affected academics' perceptions. The lack of thorough information from full professors' perception might be the limitation of the study. The researcher sent out a reminder of the invitation to newly promoted

professors in Mid-April 2014, but still there were no positive responses. This limitation is also taken into account in data analysis.

## 5. Analysis

The analysis part consists of five sections, covering the analysis of current academic promotion policy and practices in Faculty E, the analysis of the regulative, normative and cognitive guidelines for academics' activities, and finally the comprehensive analysis compounding all aspects together. The first section describes the current academic promotion system in Faculty E based on the analysis of related policy documents and interview data of policy-makers and a faculty manager. In the second section, the intended effects of the current academic promotion policy, which is interpreted as the regulative guidelines for academic work, is discussed through analyzing university documents and academics' perceived effects of the current academic promotion policy. After analyzing the regulative guidelines, the normative guidelines, the expectations of academic activities, is presented in the third section. The cultural-cognitive guidelines for academic work, including academics' perceptions of academic activities and conception of academic promotion are analyzed in the fourth section. The last section deals with comprehensive analysis of collected data through connecting them with the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 3.

### 5.1 Policies and practices of academic promotion in Faculty E

In Chapter 2, the historical development of Chinese academic promotion system and the current national academic promotion policy have been introduced. The formulation of academic promotion policy in each university in China is under the state's regime. This section is going to depict the current academic promotion policy in Faculty E of B University. The current academic promotion policy in Faculty E of B University has been in practice since 2009.

#### Formulation of the policy

The formulation of current academic promotion policy in B University is not only closely related to state regulation, but also connected to the strategic goals of the university and the Chinese national regulations. From an important university policy document, we can see that the objectives of formulating and implementing current academic promotion policy include: to improve the quality of higher education, to further reform B University's personnel system, to meet the goals of B University's strategic development, to further standardize the procedure of academic promotion, and to create a supportive institutional environment for academics' growth (HR Office in B University, 2009). Among these rationales behind formulating the academic policy, the most important rationale is to support the strategic development of B University. As Interviewee P1

stated (P1, personal communication, November 20, 2013), ‘the formulation of current academic promotion policy is under the guideline of the university strategic goals. Once the university strategic goals have been changed, the policy will follow. For instance, before our university aim to be one of the top universities in China, but now we aim to be a world-class university. This change is a very obvious signal for us (policy-makers). In the next few years, we will raise the requirement for research or teaching in academic promotion’.

Designing the quota scheme for academic promotion is a very important step in formulating the policy. Several factors are taken into account when designing the quota scheme. ‘First, the state’s policy about academic promotion, especially the regulation about the percentile structure of academics’ population with different academic ranks. Second, the university’s strategy. What type of university you are, decides how many academics with senior ranks you should hold. That’s why, in fact, in practice, (in B University) the numbers of academics with different ranks do not strictly follow the national regulation. Third, we also study the percentile structure of academics’ population of different academic ranks of well-known universities at home and abroad. After studying these successful international cases, we can suggest (to the government) that the percentage of full professors for our university probably should be larger.’ (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013). According to the national regulation, the percentile structure of academics’ population with each academic title for B University is: full professor: associate professor: lecturer: assistant teacher=20%: 30%: 40%: 10%. Interviewee P1 also pointed out that B University does not follow the state regulation of the percentile structure strictly. ‘However, for some historical reasons, the population of full professors in our university has exceeded 20% of the total population for many years. This is the reason why we need to strictly control the number of promoting full professors every year. The promotion quota for academics with senior ranks has been decreasing these years. In other words, the competition becomes more and more fierce.’ (P1, personal communication, November 20, 2013).

The quota scheme for academic promotion is adjusted every year. University policy-makers (P1, P2) said deciding the quota for promoting academics to each academic title every year is a bottom-up together with top-down process. At first, HR offices in each faculty will do a survey and calculate how many academics would like to apply for academic promotion each year. Academics who would like to apply for academic promotion in that year should approach the HR office in their faculty and

show their inclination before or during the survey. After that, the HR office in each faculty informs the University HR Office of the survey result. Taking into account several factors, such as the survey result, the regulated percentile structure of academics' population for each academic title and also the strategic goals of the university's development, the University HR office announces the annual university regulation for promoting academics at that year, in which the quota scheme for academic promotion for each faculty would be stated.

'After the announcement of the university regulation for promotion academics, each faculty can form its own faculty policy of academic promotion based on the university regulation. Nevertheless, most faculties prefer to use the university regulation directly instead of forming a new one, for the reason that it is always difficult for faculties to rationalize their choices if they make any changes.' (P1, personal communication, November 20, 2013). Interviewee P1's statement also explains why there is no specific faculty policy of academic promotion in Faculty E, though most interviewed academics claimed they believed there is an un-written faculty policy, which sets a higher requirement for academics in Faculty E, comparing to that for academics in other faculties in B University.

#### Criteria of academic promotion

In B University, evaluation of academics' performance in academic promotion focuses on both the quality and quantity of their academic productivity. The performance of academic productivity is quantified in the evaluation criteria. The quality of academic productivity is represented by their representative works. Performance indicators of academics' productivity of teaching, research and social service, include lecturing hours or the number of modules in charge, the number of research projects, the number of accomplished works, and the quality of their representative works (HR Office in B University, 2009). Accomplished works of academics, refers to all the other outcomes of academic activities except lectures and research projects, including publications in national and international journals, academic papers on international conference proceedings, monographs, edited books, rewards on teaching or research at provincial or above level, patents, applications of scientific discoveries, government consultant reports, public lectures, public exhibitions, etc. (HR Office in B University, 2009). Representative works are selected academic papers of academics to demonstrate their research and innovation capacity, which are believed as the most outstanding pieces of academics' accomplished works. Academics need to choose one to three representative



works and attach them to the application form of academic promotion to show the quality of their works to the HR Committee. The introduction of representative works has begun since 2009, with the purpose of improving the quality of academic productivity. There is a set of criteria for selecting an academic paper to be a representative work. Basically, publications of academic papers in international citation indices and the Chinese equivalent citation indices, monographs, edited books, provincial and national rewards, patents and government consult reports can be selected as representative works (HR Office in B University, 2009). Since the introduction of representative works of academics, academics have placed more emphasis on the publications of academic papers in international indices, e.g. SCI, SSCI, EI, etc.

Table 6 shows the criteria of academic promotion in B University in document (HR Office in B University, 2009). From Table 6, we can see that highest-obtained degrees and seniority, and proficiency of foreign languages are also considered as the criteria of promotion, which is coherent with the national regulation. From the written criteria, we can notice that not only the quantity of academics' productivity, but also the quality are taken into account in academic promotion. Nevertheless, in fact, these written criteria are just the basic requirement for academics to submit application for promotion. All the interviewees thought these written criteria are very low for them. For academics, the promotion pressure of academics is not from the written criteria, but the selection of promoted academics among qualified academics (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013). Because most academics can meet the written criteria, the selection of promoted academics has become more and more competitive. '(in Faculty E), it is often the case that about 20 academics can meet the promotion criteria of full professors every year, but because we need to stick to the quota scheme, there are only 5 or 6 places available for them....the competition for promotion of associate professors is even more severe.' (P2, personal communication, December 18, 2013). In 2013, the ratio of promoted full professors to qualified academics in Faculty E is 1:3, while the ratio of promoted associate professors to qualified academics is 1: 4.5. However, the criteria to select a full professor or an associate professor out of qualified academics are not visible for academics. Some interviewed academics thought the real criteria to select and promote academics are very flexible. Most interviewed academics had no idea about the real criteria, though they believed that research productivity is the key performance indicator of the real criteria.

performance indicator	required degree + seniority		proficiency of foreign languages	performance of academic activities			
				teaching hours	number of accomplished works*	number of research project	number of representative works**
Academic rank							
assistant teacher	bachelor	1 year's internship	-	-			
	<u>OR</u>	0					
lecturer	master	2 years' working experience as an assistant teacher	depends on the post	200 lecturing hours	1	1	1
				<u>OR</u>	participation in teaching as a teaching assistant every academic year		
associate professor	master	5 years' working experience as a lecturer	depends on the post	300 lecturing hours	2	1	2
	<u>OR</u>	Ph.D.		3 years' working experience as a lecturer	independently responsible for 1 module every academic year	1	
full professor	master	8 years' working experience as an associate professor	-	400 lecturing hours	3	1	3
				<u>OR</u>			
	Ph.D.	5 years' working experience as an associate professor		independently responsible for 2 modules every academic year	1	2	
				<u>OR</u>	independently responsible for 1 module every academic year		

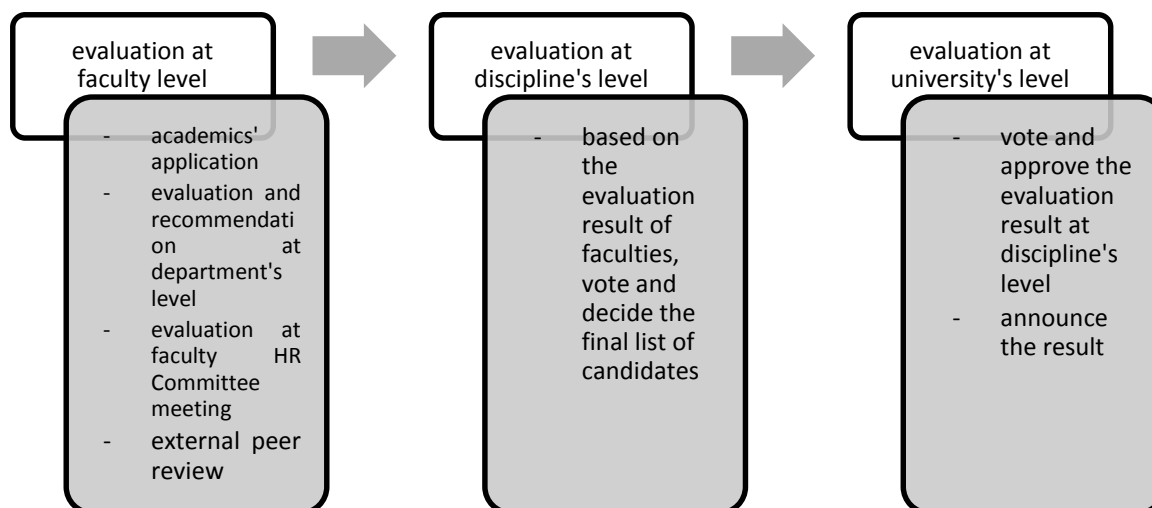
\*accomplished works include publications in national and international journals, academic papers on international conference proceedings, monographs, edited books, rewards on teaching or research at provincial or above level, patents, achievement of scientific application, government consultant reports, public lectures, public exhibitions, etc.

\*\* representative works covers publications of academic papers in international citation indices and the Chinese equivalents and citations, monographs, edited books, provincial and national rewards, patents and government consult reports

Table 6 Criteria of academic promotion in B University

### Process of academic promotion

The process of academic promotion in B University is divided into three stages: first, evaluation and recommendation at faculty's level; second, evaluation in the same disciplines; third, evaluation or approval of the university HR Committee (See Figure 3).



*Figure 3 Process of academic promotion in B University*

Academics need to submit application for promotion to the faculty HR office after the announcement of the beginning of academics promotion. The application materials include an application form, a CV, an overview of the quantity of academic productivity and their selected representative works. The department will first review the application materials and decide the recommended candidates. In Faculty E, each department can name three candidates and recommend them to the faculty HR Committee. When deciding the recommended candidates, the department also need to decide the recommendation priority for each candidate, e.g. the first candidate, the second candidate, and the third candidate. Then the faculty HR Committee members will first review all the candidates' application materials before meeting. During the meeting, candidates are required to orally present their accomplishment in teaching, research and social service, and also their vision of the work one by one in front of HR Committee members. After that, the faculty Committee members will discuss, vote and decide the list of candidates with recommendation priority for external peer review. In case that some candidates cannot pass the external peer review, the number of candidates for external peer review is larger than the number of available places for promotion. The ratio of the number of available places for promotion to the

number of recommended candidates is 1: 1.5. For example, in 2013, the quota for promotion of full professors is 5 in Faculty E. Then the faculty provided a list of 8 associate professors for the external peer review. 'The purpose of external peer review is to evaluate the quality of your publications. Experts in the same research area will review your selected representative works...they do not grade your works, but they make a judgment whether the publication is qualified or not' (personal communication, December 12, 2013). After that, the Academic Board of Discipline will review the result of the external peer review and the recommendation priority of candidates from the faculty, and decide the final list of candidates for promotion. The number of candidates in the list provided by the Academics Board of Discipline will be exactly the same as the number of places available, which was announced in the quota scheme before. In the end, the university HR Committee will discuss the list of candidates, and decide whether to approve the result from the Academic Board of Discipline or not. If it is approved by more than 2/3 of the university HR Committee members, the university HR office will announce the result and inform the candidates. Transparency of the evaluation process has been emphasized. All the application materials of candidates are uploaded to the faculty internal system and visible for all academics. The evaluation results of each step will also be on the website, so that academics can check and follow the progress.

In the whole process the first stage is the most important. According to M1, 'after the announcement of the quota scheme, actually the university shifts the responsibility to the faculty. For example, if the university says this year your faculty will have two or three places for the promotion of associate professors, it means in the end your faculty need to provide a list of at least two to three recommended academics for the promotion to the university. Actually the university doesn't care how many academics in your faculty meet the university written criteria, how many have applied for promotion, or how does your faculty select the recommended academics...the decision-making power lies on faculties.' (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013).

Interviewee P2 pointed out the process of selecting academics is a bottom-up process. That is 'Because eventually academic promotion is about the evaluation of performance of academics. Regarding performance of academics, faculties must know much better than the university management does. For sure the university management will value faculties' recommendations.' (P2, personal communication, December 18, 2013). The evaluation at discipline's level is also based on the evaluation result of the faculty, especially the recommendation priority provided by the faculty

HR Committee. Thus the evaluation result at the faculty HR Committee meeting is very decisive in academic promotion. In Faculty E, there is a voting principle for the faculty HR Committee meeting, which provides a guideline for the faculty Committee members to consider the selection of candidates. According to the voting principle for the academic promotion in 2013, there six factors needed to take into account in decision-making of voting: 1) academics' capacity (in terms of academic activities); 2) the number of available posts for promotion; 3) academics' commitment to the department, the faculty, and the university; 4) academics' moral and legal status; 5) the number of promoted academics in each department in recent years; 6) the recommendation priority provided by departments. 'The principle is written to provide a guideline to select the most excellent academics in our faculty based on the requirement from the university', P2 said, 'on one hand, we must emphasize the importance of academics' performance of academic activities, because only for this we can make sure we have selected the most suitable academics for promotion. On the other hand, we should take into consideration the recommendation priority from departments. It is for the same reason that the university relies on our faculty to select the promoted academics. Besides, we also need to balance the development of different departments.' (P2, personal communication, December 18, 2013). The principle is drawn up by the chairman and vice chairman of the faculty HR Committee (P2), then discussed by the members of the faculty HR Committee. It needs to be agreed by all the members or it cannot be put into practice.

P2 admitted that though under the guideline of the voting principle, the faculty HR Committee strives to carry out the process of academic promotion in a fair, equal and transparent way, in practice, it is difficult to assure that. Many other factors may also influence the result of voting. P2 said, 'most of the faculty HR Committee members are also the directors of their departments. They represent their departments and need to think for the faculty development of their departments. Usually the position where you are decides your stand point of view. Though ideally we hope all the members vote under the agreed guideline, but we cannot guarantee all the members will do that...Besides, most of the members are doctoral supervisors. Sometimes, some candidates come to the HR Committee meeting and present their achievement, while their supervisors are also sitting in the meeting and have the right to vote. This supervisor-ship (*shimen*) to some extent might influence the result as well...' (P2, personal communication, December 18, 2013).

Interviewee P3 pointed out the voting principle serves as a guideline for the faculty HR Committee members to make a decision of voting, but it may stay as a guideline in form only. 'Every member would have its own criteria to evaluate academics. To some extent, the decision-making process is very subjective'. (P3, personal communication, December 19, 2013). Interviewee P1 shared the same opinion as P3 did, 'because the evaluation result from the faculty HR Committee is decided by anonymous votes from the committee members, there are many factors can influence the members' decisions. It is unknown for others.' (P1, personal communication, November, 20, 2013).

As a member of the faculty HR Committee, M1 recalled when he made decisions of voting during the faculty HR Committee meeting, he would 'first look at their performance on research and teaching, especially research. For example, the number of publications, the number research projects in which they are involved, the number of monographs, and any rewards for the scientific findings. Research productivity is the most important indicator of his or her performance.' 'And then, I will check whether they have fulfilled the requirement of teaching, have gained any rewards for teaching, or have participated in the edition of any tool books. Sometimes, we will also consider his or her contribution for the development of our faculty and commitment to the faculty. Some academics only focus on their own research, and don't care the development of the faculty. But if a *danwei* needs to function smoothly, there are many administrative tasks or management work need people to take up. Sometimes we ask an academic staff member to do some administrative tasks for the organization, he refuses to do that. In this sense, we will know he only cares about his research. Though he might be doing very well in the aspect of research, but he doesn't care about the development of the organization. This is something will influence our votes also. Some academics are more responsible, and more committed to the faculty development. Besides doing research and teaching, they also spend time in contributing to the development of the organization. This is a very important factor I will take into account when I vote.' (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013). Thus a HR committee member may take into account academic performance of research, teaching and social service when he or she evaluate an academic staff member in academic promotion. Here, to M1's understanding, the performance of social service mainly deals with academics' performance of managerial activities in the faculty.

In fact, this criteria of evaluating academics when the faculty HR Committee members make decision of voting is what the academics believe as the real criteria of evaluating academics in academic

promotion. It depends on the common understandings of the faculty HR Committee members about academics' performance in different aspects, which is not readable for academics. In some sense, it is changeable, depending on the faculty HR Committee members' decisions.

## 5.2 Guideline of academic promotion policies for academic work

Last section has described the current academic promotion policy and the practices of promoting academics in Faculty E. This section will continue to discuss the intended effects of the current academic promotion policy.

First of all, we need to confirm whether academics believe the current academic promotion policy provides guideline for academics' activities. Interviewees from university management (P1, P2, P3, and M1) maintained the current academic promotion policy in B University is expected to provide a guideline for academics to conduct activities in B University. As P1 stated, 'it should be a guideline for academic activities, because it makes the requirement of being an academic member staff in our university explicit, and meanwhile draw up the blueprint of academics' career path.' (P1, personal communication, November 20, 2013).

Interviewee M1's opinion further explains the intended effects of academic promotion policy on academic work from the perspective of management. 'When the policy is formulated, it has its intention, that is, a guideline for academic activities...If you want to be promoted to be an associate professor or a full professor, first of all, you need to meet the basic criteria of evaluation in document. In this sense, it is a guideline, which will let you know in which direction you should work on. For example, if the policy states that an academic staff member needs to have at least one publication on SSCI for the application of promotion, academics will work on that following this guideline. When they want to publish an academic paper, they can get it published in any journals as they want, but they would know at least they need to get one published on SSCI, if they would like to be promoted in the future', M1 stated, 'What we expect is that academics use the criteria as a guideline for their activities. First of all, they should meet the basic requirement of promotion, and after that, they should work harder and produce more. Actually, in general, that's also what the majority of academics in our faculty are doing now. This guideline for academic activities is very important for academics' development.' (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013).

Most interviewed academics also thought the academic promotion policy serves as a guiding idea for their activities. In the opinion of Interviewee A1, 'Academic promotion for academics is like the university entrance exam for high school students. The academic promotion policy acts like a baton for academics to conduct activities.' A1 further explained the goodness of guidelines of the current academic promotion policy, 'The good thing is that it can encourage young academics to work harder. You know, usually young people feel very exhausted after completing the doctoral study, and some prefer to take a short break after graduation. Sometimes this 'short break' would become very long, lasting for five years, or even ten years. In this sense, this academic promotion policy is beneficial for academics, because it motivates young academics to continue working and save them from laziness.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Since we have confirmed that academics in Faculty E have widely accepted the current academic promotion policy as a guideline for academic work, next we need to discuss what the intended policy guidelines are. Based on the analysis of related documents and interview data, we can notice that academics in Faculty E thought that through implementing the current academic promotion policy, Faculty E aims to prioritize research among all the academic activities, encourage academic activities in the form of collaborative work, internationalize academic activities, improve the quality of academic activities, motivate academics to perform academic activities of social service, and enhance academics' faculty commitment.

#### Intention 1: Prioritization of Research activities

When interviewed academics were asked about their perception of the intended effects of current academic promotion policy, they all first mentioned the prioritization of research activities. For instance, Interviewee A3, who had applied for academic promotion for five years and got promoted in 2013, said what he did most in the past five years was research, or to be more accurate, publishing academic papers (A3, email communication, April 11, 2014). Interviewee A5 claimed though he had no idea about the real criteria of evaluating academics in the faculty HR Committee meeting, he believed a hidden performance indicator was there: that is, the number of publications, especially the publications in SSCI (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Interviewee A4 stated that 'the American higher education system has influence on the Chinese system, including our personnel system. You know, 'publish or perish' is a golden code in America. It is the same here now. Either you publish more academic papers or participate in more research projects, or you have to



leave.’ A4 even mentioned that because of the advocacy of research activities, some academics neglect the importance of teaching. ‘I know some academics even ask their Ph.D. students to prepare and give lectures for them...just to save more time for their own research.’ (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Academics believed that through the guideline of academic promotion policy, Faculty E wants to prioritize research among all the academic activities.

#### Intention 2: Encouragement of Collaborative work of Academic activities

Encouragement of academic activities in the form of collaborative work is another perceived guideline from of the current academic promotion policy in B University. Interviewed academics believed the encouragement to join a research group and cooperate with others is very explicit for many academics, and participation in the collaborative work has big impact on the result of promotion.

Interviewee A7 shared his own experience to support this perception. ‘I got promoted to be an associate professor in the third year after I became an academic. For many academics, that’s a very fast and smooth promotion. I think one of the biggest reason is that I joined a research group and worked a lot under the instruction of a group leader in the first three years. If you don’t work for a group leader, nobody will help you and speak for you in the Faculty HR Committee meeting. Before I participated in research together with others as a group, but after being promoted as an associate professor, I wanted to do research following my own interest. Currently, I work individually instead of working with other group members in a research group...I think that (working individually) might be one of the reasons why I failed in the promotion as a full professor this time.’ (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

‘If you want to beat others to gain a place of promotion, you have to find a ‘big professor’ to be your group leader, to join his research group, to support his research.’ A2 stated. For this reason, though A2 preferred to do research on his own, he joined a research group.

To academics’ understanding, the current academic promotion policy encourages academics to form or join a research group and work together in the form of collaborative work.

### Intention 3: Internationalization of academic activities

Academics thought the current academic promotion motivated them to internationalize their academic activities, especially in terms of publications. With the introduction of representative works in the evaluation criteria, the university has placed more emphasis on publications in international citation indices.

Interviewee A2 stated that because international publications have direct impact on the increase of the university's international reputation, B University highlights the importance of international publications. In A2's opinion, B University regards academics as 'bricklayers' who are helping the university build the 'Great Wall of Internationalization'. 'If we want to be promoted, we need to internationalize our activities, and publish more academic papers in international journals, especially in international indexed journals. This is a very important factor, which will influence the promotion result.' stated by A2 (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Most interviewees mentioned about publications in international indexed journals when they were talking about the intended effects of current academic promotion policy. They thought that through the guideline of the academic promotion policy, the university encourages them to increase their international publications, so as to help the university become a world-class university in the future.

### Intention 4: Improvement of the quality of research

Academics thought that through the introduction of representative works in the evaluation criteria, the university has placed more emphasis on the quality of research. Interviewee A2 pointed out that before the introduction of representative works, he strived for increasing the number of publications, but after that, he paid more attention to improve the quality of publications. 'This has changed my research direction as well as the research methods a lot. Because my research area is about education and ICTs, I can study not only on education, but also on the application of ICTs in education, the development of ICTs, and so on. After the current policy was issued, I knew if I would like to be promoted, I needed to focus on only one direction, study that area deeply, and get my research results published in a good journal. In the end, I have improved the quality of my research. Before, not only in our university, but also in many other universities in China, the quantity of

publications was emphasized. I think the current situation is much better.’ (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Through the introduction of representative works into the evaluation criteria in academic promotion, B University wants to bring the importance of quality research to academics’ attention, thus improving the quality of research.

#### Intention 5: Promotion of academic activities of social service

Through taking the performance of activities of social service into account in the evaluation criteria in academic promotion, the university intends to draw academics’ attention to the importance of social service. Interviewee A4 felt that the performance in this aspect plays an increasingly important role in academic promotion (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Other interviewed academics, e.g. A2 and A3, also thought the university has emphasized the importance of social service by considering the performance of this aspect in academic promotion. Nevertheless, they also pointed out that the intention of motivating activities of social service is explicit for academics, but the concrete evaluation criteria in this aspect is not clear (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014; A3, email communication, April 11, 2014).

#### Intention 6: Encouragement of faculty commitment

From the interviews with faculty policy-makers (P2, P3) and a faculty manager (M1), it is noticeable that through the current academic promotion system, Faculty E also intends to enhance faculty members’ sense of faculty commitment. As mentioned in the last section, academics’ performance in the aspect of managerial activities is considered in academic promotion. Though it is not written in the university policy documents, it was stated in the guideline for the faculty HR Committee meeting in Faculty E. Besides, Interviewee M1’s experience of evaluating academics and making decisions of voting also supports this statement. Through implementing the academic promotion policy, Faculty E wants to enhance academics’ faculty commitment, thus encouraging academics to commit to the faculty development. To be more specific, the faculty intends to motivate academics to take up more management work and participate in the faculty management.

Thus through implementing the current academic promotion policy, Faculty E intends to motivate academics to spend more time and efforts on research rather than other activities, to work in

research groups rather than work individually, to internationalize research activities, to improve the quality of research, to pay more attention to social service, and to be involved in the faculty management. If we consider that one of the strategic goal of B University is to be a world-class university, and Faculty E also aims at being a leading educational institute, it might not be difficult to understand the rationales behind these intended guidelines. The intended guidelines of academic promotion policy serves as a symbolic system, which has transmitted this signal to academics. Since we have discussed the regulative guidelines for academic work, in the next section we will analyze academics' perceived expectations of academic work in the academic community in Faculty E.

### 5.3 Academics' perceived expectations of academic work

Not only the policies' guidelines, but also the normative guidelines would have impact on academic work. This section discusses the norms and expectations of academic activities in Faculty E through analyzing interviewees' perceptions of expected activities in the academic community. Similar to perceptions of intended effects of the academic promotion policy, academics thought they are expected to conduct academic activities in the form of collaborative work and meanwhile internationalize their activities. Besides, they also believed they are expected to place more emphasis on activities of social service, and balance the need between research and teaching.

#### Expectation 1: Collaborative work of academic activities

All interviewed academics mentioned that they are expected to join a research group when they enter into Faculty E. Working as a group rather than working individually has almost become a type of social norms in Faculty E.

In Faculty E, there are several research groups. Usually they are formed based on different research areas. 'Academics, especially those academics are not doctoral graduates from our university, e.g. from P University, T University, etc., will realize they have to choose a specific research area and join in a research group when they enter into our university. If you would like to be an individual researcher and work alone, unless you are a full professor already, or you won't have any say at all on many issues. You have to...at least pretend to...even if you are not willing to...choose a group leader and work for him on his research. Until one day, you form your own research group and become a group leader, you will have more academic freedom.' (A2, personal communication, April

14, 2014). There are about 40 academics in A2's department, and they are divided into 7 research groups. Every research group has its uniqueness in the research area. Usually in one specific research area, there will be only one research group. Interviewee A7's opinion further explained this statement, 'in general...eventually, when a research group can be formed, it is unique. Usually you cannot find two research groups in exactly the same research area, e.g. moral education, educational history studies, higher education studies. In the area of higher education research, there won't be two research groups. It's seldom the case within a specific research area, there are two research groups. In a certain research area, either you are a member of the research group, or you are an individual researcher.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

The supervisor-ship (*shimen* relationship), or rather, the inbreeding relationship also plays an important role in forming a research group. For academics who graduate from B University, they thought becoming a group member of his or her doctoral supervisor's research group is a very natural process. Interviewee A5 stated that he was talked into becoming an academic staff member in Faculty E by his doctoral supervisor, and after that they, together with another academic staff member, formed a research group with his doctoral supervisor as the group leader (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Though it is not written in university regulations that academics must join a research group, academics felt that they are expected to do so. One rationale for the encouragement of working as a group, instead of solo, is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of producing research outcomes. 'The collaborative work of research is a borrowed experience from foreign countries. It is believed to have many benefits. Of course, it has its advantages. It assists people in producing research outcomes quickly with limited resources.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). A7 also pointed out that if academics leave a research group, they might encounter more difficulties in their career development. 'Thus working in a research group might be painful; however, in terms of getting research projects and funding opportunities, it will be easier and can be processed faster than working individually.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Hence academics choose to form or join a research group and work together as to gain more support for their academic activities. Interviewee A2's statement also supported A7's perception. 'Even though sometimes the group leader said 'if you want to work individually, you can do that. It is fine. You don't need to necessarily join in my group'...but, you know most of the research funds go directly to the pockets of research group leaders, not individual researchers. Research funds are allocated to different research groups. If you are not a member of his or her

research group, you cannot get any support from him or her, including not only research funds, but also workplace facilities, students, teaching support, etc.’ (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Whether to join a research group is not only related to financial resources, but also concerns with other support and opportunities, such as opportunities in academic promotion. As what has been mentioned before, Interviewee A7 believed joining a research group before had played a key role in his success in the first promotion. Interviewee A4 pointed out that the formation of research groups is related to the inbreeding relationship. If an academic is a doctoral student of a group leader, he or she is more inclined to be promoted. As a result, the competition in academic promotion indeed is not a competition between academics but a competition between research groups, or rather a competition between different academic hegemony (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014; A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Research collaborative work is the main academic activities in a research group. In some research groups, academics have meetings and decide the research topic or make decisions of taking research projects together (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014), while in others, the group leaders are the decision-makers (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Doing research in the form of collaborative work make some academics believe they are ‘research labors’ under the instruction of , their research group leaders, ‘labor contractors’. ‘For example, Professor T, as a group leader, he has some resources, personal connections, and a certain social reputation, which enable him to gain some research funds. And then he asks you to work with him together on a research project. The research funds are distributed by him. If the amount of research fund for the project is 50,000 *yuan* (€6,000), or 30, 000 *yuan* (€3,700), most probably he would only give you very small amount of the whole funding. In other words, you have done the job, but he only pays very little for your effort...like several thousand *yuan* (a few hundred euros)...that’s why some young academics, doctoral students, and master’s students think they are research labors.’ (A7, personal communication, April 18. 2014). It is often the case that in a research group, the group leader is responsible for gaining funding while group members carry out research projects and produce research outcomes.

Academics of the same research group work together mainly on research projects, but in some departments, academics also taught a course together as a group. For example, Interviewee A4 pointed out in her department, there are some courses are organized in the form of collaborative work. 'We also have some courses that are carried out by all the academics together. These courses include some bachelor's courses and some master's courses. For example, a course called 'comparative education'. There is another one, called 'regional education'.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Research groups compete for research fundings and other opportunities. Seldom communication and cooperation exist between research groups (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). This might be related to the *shimen* culture. As A5 maintained, within a research group, or a *shimen*, academics work together and communicate a lot, sometimes like a big family, but the communication between different *shimens* or *research groups* is scarce (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014).

Academics might have different opinions towards the collaborative work of academic activities, which will be further discussed later, but all of them believe they are expected to conduct academic activities in the form of collaborative work.

### Expectation 2: International academic activities

To internationalize academic activities is another expectation on academics in Faculty E. Most academics in Faculty E recognize they should internationalize their academics activities (A3, email communication, April 11, 2014). Several interviewed academics mentioned Faculty E has progressed quite well in recent years in the cause of internationalization. In fact, when the researcher enquired about the interviewees' schedule to make agreement on the interview schedule, most of the interviewees mentioned participation in different international conferences during that period.

Interviewed academics thought they are expected to contribute to the internationalization cause of Faculty E. International academic activities in Faculty E are not only reflected on international cooperation on research projects and publications in international journals, but also on international cooperation on teaching. 'There are many aspects of international academic activities. On one hand, in terms of teaching, we cooperate with several international universities and provide

international master programs. Except for international master programs, we also invite foreign experts to lecture in our Chinese programs for our Chinese students. On the other hand, in terms of research, we have international cooperation on research projects and also international publications.’ (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Interviewed academics maintained that young academics are expected to take the role of major force for the university’s internationalization cause, since they have advantage on English proficiency comparing to senior academics (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014).

### Expectation 3: Research-related teaching activities

Interviewee A5 maintained that academics in Faculty E know the performance of research activities is most influential in the result of academic promotion, so most academics think they should put research as a priority among all the academic activities (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Take Interviewee A3 as an example, he spends 50% of his workload on research, 30% on teaching and 20% on social service. A3 explained his workload arrangement is related to his own interest, but also to the characteristics of B University, which is a research university (A3, email communication, April 11, 2014).

Except for prioritizing research activities, academics also felt that they are expected to connect their research to teaching. Most interviewed academics maintained they are also able to integrate their research findings in teaching. As Interviewee A4 put it, the majority of academics in her department would link their research and teaching together. ‘Most of academics in our department would link their research to their teaching. I think, for one thing, we don’t have bachelor’s programs currently. It is much easier to link your research outcomes to the teaching content if you teach a master course. For another, it is because education is a very broad area and it is related to many disciplines. For example, if you teach a course about sociology, it doesn’t mean your research is not related to that. It might still be.’ (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). A2 held that academics in Faculty E are willing to integrate their research findings into teaching and share with students. Several interviewed academics, e.g. A1, A2, A4, and A7, thought they are able to link research activities with teaching activities together, and that other academics should do that as well.

### Expectation 4: Activities of social service



Interviewed academics also mentioned they are expected to perform activities related to social service. As a graduate student of B University, Interviewee A5 stated that academics are expected to conduct academic activities related to social service and about 20% of the workload should be spent on this. 'Because I did both my master and Ph.D. in B University, I knew how people are expected to conduct academic activities from the very beginning. And most of academics do as expectation' (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014).

For some academics, the academic activities related to social service has more specific meaning, that is, government policy consultancy. Interviewee A4 pointed out that they are expected to do some government policy consultant activities as a part of social service. 'Our department is like a consultant base for the Ministry of Education. That is to say, except for doing research, we are also expected to do this type of activities of social service: government policy consultancy. Because the consultant base is a branch of the Ministry of Education, lots of our work is related to government educational reform.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Hence academics in Faculty E are expected to work together as a research group, internationalize their academic activities, link their research with teaching while putting research as the priority, and perform activities related to social service. These expectations of academic activities act as normative guiding ideas for academics' behaviors. In reality, some of these expectations are widely accepted and carried out by academics, e.g. research-related teaching, while some are controversial, e.g. collaborative work of academic activities. In the next section, we will further discuss academics' personal perceptions of these expected activities as well as activities encouraged by the regulative pillar.

#### 5.4 Academics' perceptions of academic work

Not only will the regulative and normative guidelines in an institution influence academics' social behaviors and decision-making, but also the academics' personal perceptions. In this section, the academics' perceptions of academic activities as well as their conceptions of academic promotion are analyzed.

### Perception 1: of collaborative work of academic activities

First, academics thought the competition between different research groups has resulted in the imbalanced development of academic power in the university.

As mentioned before, research groups compete with each other. Academics believed the competition between research groups is mainly the competition between group leaders. Interviewee A2 thought the competition between research groups is a game played in the circle of group leaders. 'The competition between group leaders is obvious, I think. If in some areas there are funding resources, group leaders will for sure compete for the resources.' (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Academics thought that the result of this game in the circle of group leaders, or rather the result of competition between different research groups, is the development of a certain academic hegemony. It leads to the imbalanced development between different academic power, and results in the great disparity between powerful and powerless. In the end, resources all end up in the powerful group leaders' hands, including not only resources for teaching and research and other activities, and also opportunities of academic promotion. For instance, Interviewee A1's group leader is one of the most well-known and respected academic member in Faculty E. Though Interviewee A1 explained that there might be many other influential factors related to the promotion result, she also admitted that academics from her research group, get promoted faster than academics in other groups do (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Second, academics thought research groups have been utilized by research group leaders for their benefits, even on the scarification of individual group members' needs. Research groups haven't provide enough support for group members' personal development as their group leaders have promised.

Interviewee A7 stated that 'What I have seen, is that 99% of research groups, almost no exceptions, have become a tool of their group leaders or leading researchers in a certain research area to gain research resources for themselves and enrich their personal research experiences. That is to say, in fact, he uses his social status in the research area and his influence on the distribution of research resources to make others work for him, and then lots of benefits and profits come to him...So, in some sense, this continuous exploration of academics' energy and research outcomes is very unbearable...' Interviewee A7 pointed out that the existence of research group has meanwhile encouraged the phenomenon of improper and untruthful signature in publications. 'Maybe he (the group leader) hasn't contributed a lot to the research project, but he becomes the first author of

the research report, just because he is the group leader. This phenomenon, if it is in other countries, it is a form of academic misconduct, but in China, people think it is normal to do so and take it for granted. It is because that the group leader may, so may others, regard himself as the benefactor for you, for the reason that he is your supervisor, or he once helped you in your career development or he invested on your research before and helped you grow to be a matured researcher. Thus in return, you scarify your research outcomes, give them to him, and allow him to sign as the first author...thus the improper and un-truthful signature will become more frequent.’ (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

A2 pointed out that sometimes, research group leaders negotiate with each other to maximize their benefits, even on the cost of scarifying their research group members’ career development. Interviewee A2 shared his experience as the example. In the academic promotion in 2012, as A2 knew beforehand, he was on the top of the candidates’ list. However, at that moment his research group leader (Leader A) was competing with other group leader (Leader B) for a research project. In order to get the research project, Leader A made a deal with Leader B: Leader A will vote for an academic from the research group of Leader B. In return, Leader B quitted competing with Leader A for the research project, and instead, supported Leader A. As a result, not surprisingly, A2 failed in the academic promotion in 2012. Because research group leaders have impact on the academic promotion, directly (through voting) or indirectly (through the impact of their personal connections on the HR Committee members), they might use it to seek for their own needs. This has been something unbearable for academics, but most of them sadly admitted that it is not easy to be changed.

The majority of interviewed academics thought their research groups haven’t provided enough support for their personal development. For instance, Interviewee A2 thought he hardly can get any support from the research group for his personal development. ‘When you became an academic in the faculty, you were invited to join a research group, and then you followed the instructions of the group leader and worked for him. But actually, this research group hasn’t give you lots of support. Actually, I think there is no support at all. It is like a grid or a ceiling. It doesn’t allow you to go out.’ (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). However, there is one exception among interviewed academics. Opposite to A2’s perception, Interviewee A1 thought her research group is very supportive for her personal development, and her achievement is related to her group’s support.

She stated that in her research group, the group leader and other senior academics are always thinking how to help young academics. 'They always try their best to build up the platform for development for us. This platform is like a stage for us. Of course, after building up the stage, they encourage you to stand on the stage and put on a good show. They also recommend you and speak highly of you in different occasions. Because of this, we will have more opportunities than others....because of their efforts on building up the stage for us, because of their recommendations, we can have involved in many events. Something can only be realized when you are fifty in some other *danweis*, while here you can do that even when you are thirty.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Third, academics thought research activities in research groups have little contribution to knowledge pool.

Most academics thought research activities conducted by research groups are mainly problem-oriented and have little contribution to the knowledge pool. For instance, Interviewee A2 pointed out that 'In general, the usefulness of research outcomes of these research activities are very limited. Maybe to some extent, they are inspiring, but after one year, if you look at the research outcomes again, you will find they are nothing useful...Because things change a lot...As a researcher, I think we still should pursue the truth, and try to contribute to the knowledge pool. We should not just satisfy the needs of some policy-makers by solving problems during certain period for them. From this perspective, I think the collaboration of research activities is very harmful for academics' development.' (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Academics concerns that academics would give up their interest in fundamental research or pure research after getting use to the research activities in research groups. Very few people will do research following their research interest; instead, they follow their research groups. In the end, academics would lose their faith in the pursuit of truth. Thus working in a research group might lead to academics' neglect of the contribution to knowledge pool.

Fourth, working in a research group will also have impact on future development of academic profession.

For some academics, their worries concerning with research groups are not only in the aspect of current status of academic profession development, but also in the future perspective. Interviewee A7 expressed his worries, 'Currently every academic staff member works in the research group

under the instruction of the group leader. The group leader takes his group members' research outcomes. His group members, usually young academics, including his doctoral students, work like labors and contribute their achieved outcomes to him. What I am afraid, is that these young academics and doctoral students will think it is the right way to do so. They will think this is the normal way to do research and they should also do that. In the end, they will become another 'him' in the future. Once this happens, I think we would have lost the hope of Chinese academics. This is the most terrible thing. For example, when improper signature has been accepted by everyone, people won't think it is un-justice to do so. When this un-justice status become normal, the justice status will become abnormal. If you don't do that, people will think you are abnormal. At that moment, you can imagine, how terrible it will be...young academics would think the reason that they bear this un-justice treatment today, is one day when they become a group leader, they can make profit from their group members. They can make up for what they have lost...in the end, everybody becomes a slave.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

Nevertheless, Interviewee A7 is optimistic about the future of academic profession in China. A7 held that more and more academics will come to realize the importance of working individually, stop following the crowd, and then do research following their research interest for the sake of knowledge itself. A7 said he has the faith on the future of Chinese academic profession. 'Actually I found several academics having the same goal as mine. There are some people, they know what they should do and decide not to follow the crowd', A7 stated, 'Though there are not a lot of people persisting, but some still do. A majority of academics are confused and following the norms. Some academics might know they should insist on the righteous status, but they also need to stand being isolated, and they need to be strong enough...and to some extent, a gift for research and a certain research capacity are needed as well...I admire these people, and I learn from them. Of course we would not talk about this in public, but we know we are in the same camp. For instance, a group of academics in the Department of Philosophy in P University, who have studied abroad and return to China, currently are working on fundamental research related to their own research interest. Probably you seldom see them in any big academic events, but they will produce some very contributive monographs and other impressive research outcomes from time to time. I've learnt a lot from their works. So I realize there are still some academics in Chinese universities working for the sake of knowledge. Though we don't know each other personally, when I saw their names, when I read their quality papers, I know I am not alone in my camp.' (A7, personal communication, April

18, 2014). A7 believed that Internationalization of higher education will also contribute to improving the current situation through cultivating more and more overseas returnee academics.

Fifth, academics are facing the dilemma of working in a research group or working individually and worried about the restricted academic freedom.

Even though most of the academics worry about the imperfections of research groups, very few of them are courageous enough to work individually. The majority of academics are facing the dilemma of working in a research group or working individually. Interviewee A2's consideration sheds a light of academics' dilemma, 'At the very beginning, I was also hesitating. I was thinking whether to work individually...for academic freedom, and also for my independent thinking...you know, only if you have your own independent thinking, you can get an in-depth understanding of the researched issues. You don't need to do other things except your own research. There are not so many restrictions on your activities...In a research group, even though academics are in the same research area, academics' opinions vary. It is seldom the case people would have the same opinion. As a result, usually you need to compromise. Once you compromise, your own opinion and your independent thinking on a certain issue will be just gone. Your understanding of a certain issue will become swallow. The real contribution to the knowledge pool will disappear...Sometimes, I am really confused about this. To be or not to be? But I know, if I work individually, I will never get any opportunities. I will never get promoted.' (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). In the end, A2 chose to join a research group and worked for the group leader. For A2, these worries are not just self-created suspicion. He took his colleague K as an example to support his opinion. Back in the master's study, K was A2's classmate. According to A2, K is very talented in his research area, and he took the MD-PhD program in Faculty E, which is a very rare opportunity. So K had graduated one year earlier than A2 did. Right after K's graduation, he became an academic staff member in Faculty E; however, after about 8 years' working, K is still a lecturer today. A2 believed there were many reasons behind K's failure of promotion, and working individually instead of joining any research groups is one of the reasons (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Struggling between research group's activities and individuals' own research activities, most academics, who chose to join a research group, thought the collaboration of research activities have limited their academic freedom. Interviewee A4 stated that she has little control of choosing research projects in her research group. Once their research group gets the task or research projects

from the Ministry of Education or the Beijing municipal government, they have to do that. Interviewee A4 pointed out they only have limited academic freedom, which is represented by their own research projects (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). For Interviewee A4, about a half of her workload contribute to the research group's activities. In her point of view, fortunately the research projects in her research groups are significant and useful. They might have impact on educational policy-makings and contribute to the educational reform as well as the development of the educational system. In this case, even though only a half of her research activities deal with her own research interest, she is satisfied with the current situation. Unlike A4, Interviewee A5 felt depressed because of the collaboration of research activities. 'now I feel I've lost myself...I think the biggest problem is that currently the collaboration has taken up almost all my time and I don't have time to do my own research. I've mentioned before that I have my own research projects, and I also need to participate in the research projects in our research group. But now, actually I hardly have time to work on my own project...because I am the youngest in our research group, I need to not only do group research activities, but also do some coordination work...I feel very anxious about my working status at present...currently I am doing lots of things passively every day...I cannot work on my own research...' (A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). The same as A4, A5 also felt he has no control on deciding the research projects in his research group. A5 believed that one of the reasons why he was so occupied by the research group's activities is that his group leader kept taking new research projects these years, without asking other members' willingness. Hoping to change the depressing situation at present, A5 expressed his wish for his group leader to stop bringing any new research projects into his research group.

Among all the interviewed academics, only Interviewee A7 does research individually at present. Interviewee A2 once wanted to quit working in his research group after the third failure in promotion, but after the group leader had promised him to support him in the latest round of academic promotion, he dropped the idea. A7 thought one of the reasons that he is able to work individually is because he was promoted to be an associate professor very smoothly before. It means he has a certain advantage in terms of time, and he has some say in his research area currently, which enable him to work individually for his own research. However, A7 also admitted that even though he thought negatively of the collaboration of research activities, he would not revolt against it. 'Currently I can only be righteous alone without thinking of others. I can only make sure myself be away from the collaboration of research groups...In my opinion, there are three groups of

academics in Chinese system currently. One group is 'compliers'; the second group is 'resistants'; the third group is 'recluses'. Recluses do not comply with the norms or rules, but they also do not revolt against the norms or rules. Instead, they exile themselves by 'jumping into a speedy train, allowing it take him to the wild woods'. They only pay attention to their own development. Actually, I would like to be one of the third group of academics, but I don't know in the end who I will be...But that's all I can do for now.' Even though A7 is able to work on his own research at present regardless of the pressure from the research group in his research area, he also showed his concerns on persistence. 'I don't know how long I can persist in...It relies on your research capacity as well as your strong character. It depends on whether you can bear being alone and being unjust treated. When you face unjust treatment, it is difficult to stay strong. It is similar to the decision of running a red light or not. If many people run a red light, nothing bad happens. Instead they get to the destination earlier than you do. If you see this, can you still persist in waiting there for the green light? Actually it is very difficult...If right across the street there is water, people who run a red light can get there earlier and drink up the water, right? You are very thirsty and waiting for the green light. If you persist in waiting, probably when you get there, there is nothing left. In this case, will you persist still? Will you stay there and follow the rule of 'not running a red light'? Or will you just follow the crowd and violate the rule? In this sense, persistence is very difficult.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Joining a research group, similar to running a red light, provide a short cut to get the 'water', the research resources and support. The situation of working individually on one's own research is similar to the status of strictly following the traffic rule, which is believed as the righteous status by A7.

Interviewee A7 maintained that the fundamental reason he would make this decision is that academic freedom is the most important matter for him. 'People make their choices. For me, I would rather keep my academic freedom, even on the cost of losing some opportunities. I've even prepared myself for not getting promoted in the near three to five years. Even on the cost of this, I would not do that (join in a research group again).' 'Sometimes I prefer to do research following my own research interest. Everyone should have something valuable in his heart, which he never wants to exchange for anything.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). For A7, the 'something' is his faith for academic freedom.



Other academics who have chosen to work in a research group also have the faith for academic freedom. Or more exactly, they are eager to get more academic freedom. Interviewee A1 mentioned what she regarded as the ideal working status is when academics don't have any pressure and feel free to work following their academic interest and social conscience, but she also pointed out it is nearly impossible to realize it in the current Chinese higher education system. In general, academics felt that the collaboration of academic activities have hurt the academic heartland, but still the majority chose to stay in a research group for various considerations, such as research resources and career development opportunities.

#### Perception 2: of international academic activities

On one hand, interviewed academics thought their faculty members consider the internationalization of academic activities is of importance for academics' development. Interviewed academics all held positive attitude towards the internationalization of academic activities.

'To some extent, internationalization of our academic activities is very helpful for our self-reflective development. It also contributes to developing international connections and to wider and deeper international exchange of research outcomes...It has opened our mind, risen the requirement for our performance, standardized our academic activities, and involved us in the international academic community.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Interviewee A7's understanding of internationalization of academic activities showed academics in Faculty's willingness in this aspect. Interviewee A4's statement also demonstrates academics' inclination of internationalization. 'I cannot speak for the whole faculty, but at least in our department, we really want to internationalize our activities...we want the world to hear the voice from Chinese academics. We would like to cooperate with international organizations, to internationalize our teaching and research, to send our students abroad to study relevant knowledge and get to know the world, to introduce advanced knowledge and technology into our country from the outside world. In my opinion, the need for internationalization is from the bottom of our hearts.'(A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). International study or working opportunity is seen as a breakthrough for academics' career development. Interviewee A5 mentioned he has been seeking for opportunities to go abroad for study, since he felt depressed because of the research group's activities.

All the interviewed academics participated in various international activities, covering research and teaching. Take A7 as an example, during the period of arranging the appointment for interview, he was co-editing a book with an American professor, working as a coordinator of an international joint doctoral program, and meanwhile organizing an international student aids project. 'Every year, I will invite one to two respected professors from well-known universities, e.g. Michigan State University, to come and give a lecture for my students. I've invited a professor from Harvard University this time. In December, most probably I will invite a professor from Pennsylvania University to come...and also one professor from Michigan State University...my academic activities has been internationalized since I studied in America.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Other academics are also involved in different kinds of international academic activities. As Interviewee A1 recalled, about a half of her workload deals with international academic activities.

Even though interviewed academics all recognized the successful progress of international cause in Faculty E, they also notice there is still space for improvement. 'In general, of course, our developmental level does not match the international advanced level, though I feel we have been progressing very fast these years...I think there are two aspects need to be further internationalized: First, the university management system; second, the social and cultural knowledge system...The thing is that we academics want internationalization, and we do internationalize our activities, but the whole backup system doesn't follow up.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

On the other hand, interviewed academics are critical about the emphasis of publications in international citation indices. Some interviewed academics (A1, A4, A5, A7) thought the overemphasis of international citations have reflected the absence of a recognizable and fair evaluation system for evaluating the quality of academic activities in Chinese academic profession.

'Personally I don't appreciate the emphasis of SSCI in the evaluation criteria of academic promotion. First, actually, every academic member staff, who has overseas study experience, may know 'SSCI' is created based on American system. Even some good quality European journals are not included in the citation indices list. Second, different countries may have different issues and problems...but the thing is, as we are Chinese researchers, who are doing research about Chinese system, if we would like to publish some academic papers in SSCI, most probably we have to speak ill of Chinese

system. I'm not saying we must always write about positive aspects of Chinese system, but what I want to point out is that the values orientation of SSCI is not objective. Third, I sense it is a form of self-colonization...actually if you read some papers in SSCI, how many of them are really of good quality? Except for that they are written in English...If we want, we can also write our papers in English. This is not a problem...But do you think within these restrictions and values orientation, can academic produce many academic papers valuable and useful for the society? Using international indices might be suitable for American society...but the thing is, is it applicable in Chinese system? For instance, American system is managed by a federal government, but Chinese system is governed by a central government. Can the situations be the same? Anyhow, in my opinion, in many cases we should consider a problem or an issue in its context. Besides, we all know that behind SSCI, there is a business group to promote its popularity for profits.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014). A1 thought it is reasonable to publish academic papers in English, which would enhance international exchanges in academic community, but academics should also be sensible of the values orientation behind the international citation indices.

Interviewee A7 thought the emphasis of international citation indices have led academics to overlook the quality of academic papers themselves. Instead, academics would only focus on the level of journals in which they can get their paper published. A7 believed that because of the absence of a common criteria to evaluate the quality of academic papers in China, people use the level of journals in which papers are published to judge the quality. Thus an academic's research achievement is judged by the number of his academic papers in citation indexed journals. 'We know that in foreign countries, it is often the case even a talented researcher would only have two to three very good quality publications, but these two to three pieces of academic papers are his or her masterpieces. This is not because they are published on a so-called core journal...of course, there should be also some requirement of the journal...it is because through peer review, other academics in the same research area recognize the value of his or her papers. Peer review plays an important role in evaluating the quality of academic papers in western countries. Even though a paper is not published in a citation indexed journal, if it is of good quality, its value will be recognized and admired by peer academics. But this case seldom happens in China. At least in B University, it is almost impossible.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

Both Interviewee A1 and A7 proposed that we should rely on peer review to evaluate the quality of an academic paper. However, at the same time A7 also pointed out currently peer review in Chinese academic promotion system hasn't realized its intention of evaluating the quality of research. Basically, it stays in form, being carried out as a 'symbolic step' in the academic promotion process. Nevertheless, A7 maintained he would spend more time writing a good quality paper rather than thinking of different methods to get a poor quality paper published in a citation-indexed journal.

Interviewee A3 had similar opinions towards the emphasis on international citation indexed journals. He pointed out the even the idea of using citation rate as a criterion might be problematic. 'Some publications might have very a low citation rate, but probably it is because the research area is relatively new and not many researchers are involved in. Some publications might have high citation rate, but it may imply many researchers are working in this area already, which is not good for inbreeding innovative ideas.' (A3, email communication, April 11, 2014).

In general, academics in Faculty E are inclined to internationalize their academic activities, especially in research cooperation and exchange activities, and international publications, but they doubt the overemphasis of international citation indices in evaluating the quality of research outcomes

### Perception 3: of activities of social service

Performance of activities of social service is one of the performance indicators for academics; however, if we believe academics have come to a common understanding of international academic activities, it is not the same case for academics' perceptions of activities related to social service. It seems that interviewees interpret 'activities of social service' in different ways. There is no clear definition of 'activities related to social service' for academics in Faculty E.

Interviewee M1, as a faculty manager but also a senior academic, held that 'what I understand as 'activities of social service' is the managerial activities in a faculty or in a university. One example is taking up some management positions. Another example is working for some academic associations. Sometimes, consultant activities for the Ministry of Education or participation in educational reform policy-makings can be also counted as...In the most cases, when we evaluate your performance on social service as an academic member staff, we would pay more attention to

what responsibilities you've taken up in the faculty or in the university.' (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2013).

As M1 has dual identity, both academic and manager, his perception is quite different from other academics'. Among all interviewed academics, only A2 and A6 thought activities of involving in faculty management can be regarded as a part of activities of social service. 'Actually, it is everything except for research and teaching', Interviewee A2 stated, 'it includes many activities, such as being a class headmaster, doing some administrative work in the university, joining in an academic association and acting as a secretary of the association, playing an important part in the Ministry of Education's or government's projects, being a policy consultant for some institutions or enterprises...If your research projects are related to social engagement, they can also be a kind of activities of social service. Providing training courses, getting sponsorship for the university, doing some charity activities can also be counted as 'activities of social service'. Even some activities related to popularization of science or social science can also be regarded as 'activities of social service'.' (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014). A6 also thought activities of social service include managerial activities in a faculty, a university and an academic association (A6, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

Other academics thought 'activities related to social service' should not include managerial activities in a university. 'In my opinion, 'activities of social service' should be some activities concerning with society, the society outside the university...At least, not the managerial activities in a *danwei*.' A1 stated (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014). A1 also shared her own experience as an example, 'my activities related to social service can be seen to consist of several parts: first, professional training for teachers; second, the transfer of my research outcomes in the society, e.g. cooperation with social media to popularize the research outcomes and information of education in general...and third, voluntary working in a charity association, which is not directly related to my research' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014). Other academics shared the same opinion. For instance, Interviewee A7's understanding of activities of social service is similar to A1's. 'It should include activities related to academic associations, e.g. managerial activities in an academic association, and some research projects related to social engagement...and also professional training during summer holidays, some teaching activities for part-time postgraduate students.' (A7,

personal communication, April 18, 2014). Hence academics in Faculty E haven't reached a common understanding of 'activities related to social service'.

Nevertheless, though academics have different understandings of 'activities of social service', when come to concrete activities, e.g. managerial activities in the faculty, professional training, research projects related to social engagement, etc., academics have more or less the same attitude towards these concrete activities.

In terms of managerial activities in the faculty, even though it is debatable to include it in the range of 'activities of social service', almost all academics believe academics should get rid of managerial activities. As Interviewee A4 stated, 'I think people who are doing managerial activities in a faculty and people who are conducting academic activities should be separated, and support each other. Actually, I think management should serve academics...There should be some people to do managerial activities exclusively. Managerial activities is also very important, right? It will influence a university's efficient functioning, and it is also of significance for a university's strategic development, but this should not be fulfilled by academics, especially young academics...Putting some academics who would like to concentrate on their personal development in academic area in the position of management, actually is a waste of these academics' gift for research. Besides, whether these academics have the managerial skills to run the faculty is also doubtful.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). A4 maintained that for young academics, the first few years after they become an academic staff is very critical for their personal development in academic area, during which period they should be allowed to fully concentrate on research without being distracted by managerial activities. All the interviewed academics hoped they can reduce their workload of managerial activities. 'The ideal working status is that I can reduce the workload of finishing administrative tasks. Or rather, I can solely focus on my research and teaching without involving in any managerial activities. It is because that these managerial activities have nothing to do with my research area.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014). Interviewee A4's statement represented all interviewed academics' heartfelt wishes.

Though all interviewed wish to reduce the workload of managerial activities, Interviewee A1's perception of managerial activities is slightly different from others'. A1 thought managerial activities in the faculty symbolizes a kind of responsibility for the faculty that young academics should take

over. 'Actually it is a commitment to an organization. If you want to have an organization function smoothly, you need to have someone to take up these management tasks and organizational work. To put it another way, when you enter into this organization, the senior academics have already worked for the management of the faculty for a long time, as a young academic, shouldn't you consider to take over the responsibility? In the future, you can pass the responsibility to the late-comers. Besides, it is also a good way for new-comers to get familiar with other colleagues and get used to the working atmosphere in the research group.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014). Interviewee M1 also admitted that as a manager, he also noticed that the majority of academics are reluctant to involve in managerial activities. 'To my estimation, probably two thirds of academics in our faculty are not willing to involve in any managerial activities. They would think this will take up their time, which can be used for writing academic papers, doing research, etc. But there will be also one third of academics they would think this is also a part of their job. They will think that since they work in this *danwei*, they should also contribute to its development.' (M1, personal communication, December 12, 2014). As a faculty manager, M1 wishes more academics can take over the responsibility to involve in the management of the faculty.

In terms of other activities related to social service, such as research projects in cooperation with local governments, professional training for primary schools' teachers, and activities about knowledge transfer, all interviewed academics held positive attitude. They believed activities of social service is very important and academics should be more involved in social development. 'In terms of activities related to knowledge transfer and other activities of social engagement, I am willing to do these activities, because I think we cannot keep ourselves in the Ivory Tower forever. Especially after considering our research area is education, which is already very isolated from the society, I feel more motivated to participate in activities of social engagement. Only after you see how the research outcomes are applied in society, can you know what you've learnt is connected to the society, that is, the social value of your research. In this sense, I would like to participate in activities of social service, but I will also control the quantity of that.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Interviewee A2's opinion also supports A7's. A2 maintained that academics should do some activities related to social engagement, but for sure it is not as important as research.

Since academics haven't reached a common interpretation of 'activities of social service', it is difficult to generalize academics' attitude in this aspect. To some extent, Interviewee M1's

interpretation of activities of social service also demonstrates the university management's intention to enhance academics' commitment to the faculty development; however, the majority of academics still believe managerial activities should not be considered as a part of activities related to social service, neither should the performance of managerial activities be considered in academic promotion. If we do not consider managerial activities as a part of activities of social service, generally it is safe for us to make the judgment that academics feel they should and also want to participate in activities related to social service.

#### Perception 4: of relationships between research, teaching and social service

First, in terms of teaching-research nexus, all the interviewed academics thought their teaching is connected with their research. Furthermore, they also believed when conducting academic activities, academics should try to link research and teaching together.

Interviewee A4 pointed out, 'Academics should know how to fulfill your teaching responsibility, how to balance the need between teaching and research and how to introduce the new idea from research outcomes into teaching content. I am able to do that. I think other academics should be able to do that as well.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

Interviewee A1 maintained whether an academic can link his or her research to his or her teaching depends on academics' attitude towards teaching-research nexus. 'For example, the course I teach is research method, but my research area is about international organizations. It seems that there is no connection between these two issues. But it depends on how you handle it. You can develop the connection by yourself. I deal with it in this way: when I teach students of research methods, for sure I need some cases to share with students, so that they can get a better understanding. I use my research experience as cases database to share with my students. For example, I told them what happened in the process of my research, such as how I designed the research, what kind of mistakes I made when I first conducted a survey, what funny stories happened when I did interviews...and then they will have a vivid impression of doing research', A1 stated, 'Sometimes, I will also ask my students to brainstorm together with me when I want to develop a new research design for a new topic in my research area. I think it is a good idea to do that.' (A1, personal communication, April 17, 2014).



Interviewee A7 also held that it is not difficult to link the research outcomes to teaching content. Moreover, he believed teaching in return benefits his research as well. 'Actually teaching and research benefit from each other. For example, when you have some new research outcomes, you share with students. Students will learn from your research. After that, students will give you their feedbacks. As a teacher, I also learn from students' feedbacks. You can also see the knowledge exchange in this process. When you think about this, you will realize all your efforts on teaching and research are worthy.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

Second, in terms of balancing the needs for different academic activities, some academics implied because of the prioritization of research activities in B University, it is difficult for them to concentrate on teaching and keep a balance between teaching and research.

Interviewee A5 stated that he prefers to do teaching among different academic activities, but because of the regulative requirement, he needed to spend more time on research. Interviewee A7 also explained that because of the prioritization of research activities, he went through a long journey to mature his teaching framework for a course. 'I have invested a lot on teaching. Every year, I read new reading materials and re-prepare lecturer materials. Gradually I have developed a complete teaching framework for a course. But you know, currently our university has laid more emphasis on research, so I cannot give up research to use one semester solely for teaching. I cannot do that, so I can only work on the framework development before lectures. As a result, I need to teach two to three times of the same course, which means two to three years or even longer time, to finally develop the teaching framework for a course. It is similar to build a house, which needs three to five years.' (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). A7 pointed out that to enrich a teaching framework and develop a matured teaching system needs lots of time and efforts. However, at present, because of the emphasis on research over teaching, it is hardly possible to realize this in a short period. In order to balance the need between teaching and research, academics try different methods to arrange their academic activities. For example, Interviewee A1 and A4 arranged all their lecturing hours in one semester, so that in one semester they can pay more attention to teaching while in another semester they can fully concentrate on research to make up the required research workload.

Third, all interviewed academics recognize research as a priority among all academic activities. In reality they also spend more time on research. For example, Interviewee A7 stated that currently

research activities takes up 50% of his workload; the left are teaching and social service, 25% for each. Some academics have distributed the workload equally for research, teaching and social service, e.g. A2 and A4. When being asked about the preferred working status, most academics wish to reduce or get rid of the workload of managerial activities, so that they can spend more time on research.

In general, with the emphasis of research in B University, academics in Faculty E has prioritized research activities among all academic activities. Nevertheless, academics in Faculty E do not neglect the importance of teaching. For most academics, teaching activities is an enjoyable part of their work. Regarding the managerial activities for the faculty (even though whether it can be counted as a part of activities of social service is still debatable), most academics prefer to reduce the workload in the aspect.

#### Academics' conceptions of academic promotion

All interviewees maintained academic title is very important for academics. Interviewed academics believed academic title is a recognition of academics' contribution in academic area and of their academic capacity. To some extent, academics regard academic title as a spiritual reward for their hard-work in academic area. Thus most academics thought academic promotion should be solely related to their performance of academic activities. For example, as Interviewee A4 stated, 'actually academic title should be closely related to your performance of research and teaching activities in daily life. Academic promotion should select those who have excellent performance in these aspects.' (A4, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

However, the meanings behind academic ranks are not solely a social recognition. More than a half interviewed academics mentioned an academic title, especially a senior academic title means a new developmental platform for them. Interviewee A4 mentioned there are some research projects are only available for academics with senior academic title. That is, one needs to be an associate professor or a full professor, and then he or she is eligible to apply for the research project. A lecturer would encounter more difficulties in getting a research project and have less chance to get research financial support. Interviewee A6 stated that after being promoted to be a full professor, he was able to apply for more research projects, which he would like to participate in before. A6 also pointed out that not only the opportunities for applying for a research project have been increased,

but also the opportunities to participate in other academic activities, e.g. international conferences, public lectures, consultant activities, etc.

Interviewee M1's explanation for why academics felt pressured about academic promotion also supported other academics' perception of academic promotion. M1 thought for most academics, academic promotion is a kind of social recognition of one's efforts and contribution in academic area. Many lecturers failed to be promoted as associate professors, thus feeling stressful. The pressure not only comes from the application for research projects, but also in social activities. An academic with a senior academic rank is more widely recognized and respected in Chinese society. Besides, though there is no big difference between salaries for academics with different academic ranks, academics with senior academic ranks will have more opportunities to participate in different activities, thus increasing their earnings in sorts of occasions.

Interviewee A6 believed academic title is a matter of the utmost importance for academics. 'An academic title has many meanings, e.g. recognition of one's academic capacity, one's social status, one's status in academic community, and also a say in one's research area...this academic title can bring you lots of benefits. These benefits can be either material or spiritual. They affect academics' personal development. It concerns with academics' interests.' (A6, personal communication, December 17, 2013). Meanwhile, as a newly promoted full professor, A6 also thought the title of 'full professor' also means a kind of academics' responsibility for him. 'As a full professor, I will be more prudent when I speak out my opinions, because others will think since you are a full professor, your words are reliable. They will respect you, but others' respect also requires you to be more careful of your words and behaviors. It is because that you need to consider the influence of your words and behaviors on others. This deals with academics' responsibility.' (A6, personal communication, December 17, 2013).

Most academics thought academic promotion should be purely related to the evaluation of academics' performance of academic activities. In reality, academics felt that in B University, managers have mis-interpreted the meaning of academic promotion. Instead, they use 'academic title' as a reward for academics' overall performance including academics' contribution to the faculty development. Some academics even have the feeling that university managers as well as research group leaders have manipulated the current academic promotion system to force

academics to work for them. Interviewee A2 thought this phenomenon does not only exist in B University, but also in many other Chinese universities. Academics maintained that the evaluation in academic promotion is a form of external evaluation of academics' performance (A3, email communication, April 11, 2014); however, currently in Chinese universities, a widely recognized and convincing evaluation system of academics' performance of academic activities has not been established, which make it possible for non-academic factors to have impact on the evaluation results of academics' performance in academic promotion (A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014). Some academics believed university managers' mis-interpretation and manipulation of academic promotion have resulted in the unfair competition in academic promotion (A2, personal communication, April 14, 2014; A5, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Interviewee A5 held that university managers should use other forms of reward, e.g. annual bonus, instead of academic title, to reward academics' outstanding performance of managerial activities. Most interviewed academics had similar thinking as A5 did.

### 5.5 Comprehensive analysis

Figure 4 and Figure 5 together demonstrate the summary of analysis result. Regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements in the academic community of the case all have impact on academic activities. In terms of regulative guidelines for academic activities, through enforcing the current academic promotion policy and practices, the management of Faculty E in B University intends to impose the idea of developing a world-class research-oriented university on academics. Academic promotion is manipulated as a reward in an attempt to influence academics' behaviors. Under the regulative guidelines, academics shall accord high priority to research. Quality rather than quantity of research is emphasized. Regarding the form of research activities, academics are guided to cooperate with other researchers in a research group. Academics are also guided to internationalize their academic activities and improve social engagement. To perform managerial activities, which is interpreted as being committed to the faculty development, is also one aspect of regulative guidelines for academics' activities.

Binding expectations from the academic community also influence academics' decision-makings of behaviors. Similar to the impact of regulative pillar, under the impact of normative guidelines, academics in Faculty E are expected to form or join a research group and do research in cooperation with others, participate in international academic activities, and involve in activities of social service.

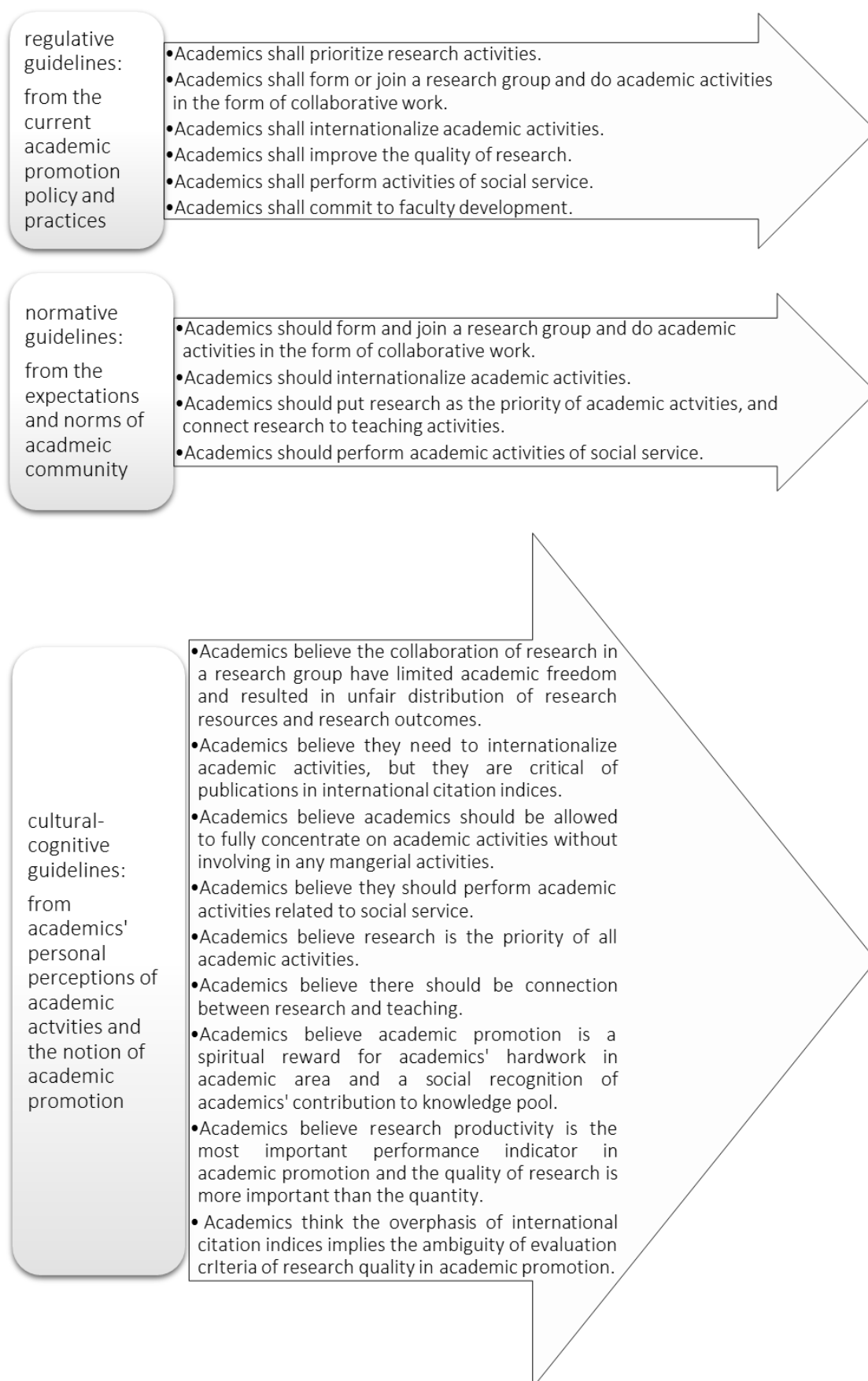
Academics observe the expectation of prioritization of research, but they also hold the belief of necessity to balance needs of research and teaching and make good use of teaching-research nexus. Most of the regulative guidelines for academic activities can find their counterparts in the normative aspect, which is not a surprising finding, but a certification of Scott's (2013) observation that the regulative and normative pillars can be mutually reinforcing. Symbolic systems of regulative pillar, such as rules, regulations, policies, etc. are seldom content to base their regime on force alone; instead, they usually attempt to use the authority of binding expectations, in which coercive power is legitimated by a normative framework (Scott, 2008). One big difference between guidelines of regulative and normative pillars is the different guidelines for faculty commitment. Most academics in the case do not think they should perform managerial activities to show their commitment for the faculty, while the regulative guidelines intend to lead them to do so. This manifest academics' intention to shift their identity from a *danweiren* to a professional academic worker, even though the leadership of the organization is still lingering on the legacy of *danwei* culture.

The analysis of academics' perceptions of academic activities and conception of academic promotion shows that regulative and normative pillars are not completely alliance with the current cultural-cognitive pillar in the academic community. In other words, guidelines of regulative and normative pillars have not been successfully internalized into academics' cognitive perceptions. Academics do not believe joining a research group and doing research in the form of collaborative work is beneficial for their personal development. Instead, they believe academics should be given more freedom and autonomy in deciding their research topics, distributing their workloads and choosing the way of doing research. The same attitude is manifested towards managerial activities. Academics share the same belief that academics should be allowed to fully involve in academic activities without spending time in managerial activities as to show their commitment to the faculty. To some extent, academics value academic freedom and personal development over the commitment to the faculty development. The need of internationalization of academic activities, prioritization of research, and recognition of the importance of social service has come to be a shared understandings among academics. Even though research has been regarded as the utmost important mission for academics, academics believe a good academic should be able to balance the needs of different academic activities, and make good use of the nexus of teaching and research. A good academic should also put quality of research over quantity of that and try to make contribution to the development of knowledge pool through their quality research. A shared un-certainty or

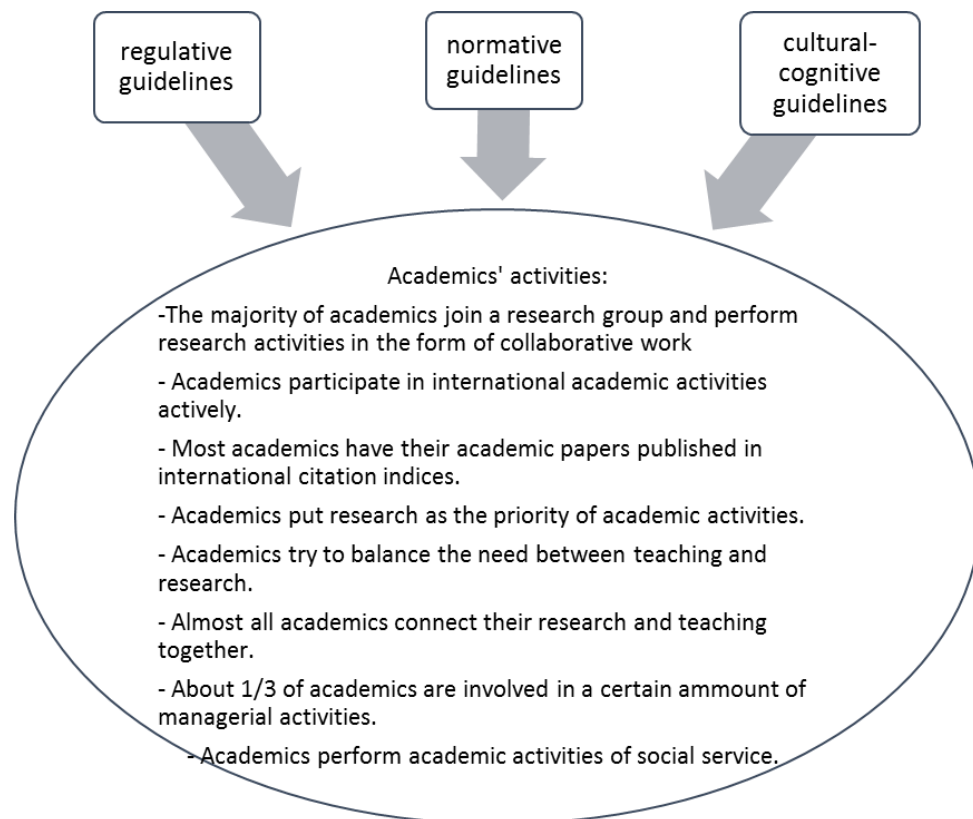
confusion of the use of international citation indices in quality evaluation of research outputs can be discerned as well. There is some confusion of the understanding of the conception of social service among academics, which means academics haven't come to a shared understanding of social service in the case academic community. In terms of conception of academic promotion, academics believe it should be regarded as a spiritual reward for academics' hard work in academic area as well as a kind of social recognition of their contribution to knowledge pool.

Academics in Faculty E make decisions of their actions and do academic activities under the impact of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines (see Figure 5). In reality, we can observe that in the case academic community, the majority of academics do form or join a research group and perform academic activities in the form of collaborative work. Academics are participating in international academic activities actively, and the number of international publications has been increasing in recent years. Academics accord high priority to research, but meanwhile they are working on balancing the needs of different academic activities. Most academics prefer and are able to connect their research outcomes to their teaching content. Though most academics are unwilling to involve in managerial activities, about one third of academics take up a certain amount of managerial activities. Academics are also participating in various activities of social service.

If we compare the academic activities in reality to the encouraged activities of regulative pillar, expected activities of normative pillar, and culturally and cognitively supported activities, we can observe that the academic activities in reality is most coherent with the normatively expected behaviors. This might imply the guidelines of normative elements have the most influential impact on academic activities in the case academic community. As mentioned before, the moral values orientation of traditional Chinese society still has impact on the development of academic profession today, actually in the whole modern Chinese society, thus a morally governed legitimacy, which comes from normative authority, might have deeper influence on academics' behaviors in the case.



*Figure 4 Regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive guidelines for academics work*



*Figure 5 Academics' activities in Faculty E*

We expect academics will continue doing some certain activities mentioned in the future, e.g. the internationalization of academic activities, the prioritization of research, and the involvement in activities of social service, because they are legally, morally and culturally supported by three pillars. Take internationalization of academic activities as an example (see Figure 6), regulative rules, binding expectations and constitutive schema in Faculty E are all guiding academics to internationalize their academic activities. The same trend can be discerned in the case of prioritization of research and the involvement of social service. Three forces of regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive pillars are aligned and giving the same guideline of social action for academics, which make these academic activities persist, until one pillar changes and breaks the alliance.

Some activities, which are encouraged by the regulative guidelines but not supported by other pillars, might be fleeting in the future, e.g. joining a research group and doing research in the form



of collaborative work, publishing academic papers in international citation indices, and involving in managerial activities. As Figure 7 presents, the regulative and normative pillars mutually enforce the behavior of collaboration of research, which make the majority of academics comply with the guideline. However, academics' cognitive conception of research activities and academics' common belief of academic freedom make academics doubt the certainty of doing research in this way. As what've been mentioned before, more and more academics would come to realize the imperfection of research groups and choose to work individually (Interviewee A7, personal communication, April 18, 2014), the current situation will be changed at that moment. The same assumption can be applied to the analysis of publishing academic papers in international citation indices as well. But when it comes to 'the involvement of managerial activities', the situation is a bit different. As Figure 8 shows, only the regulative pillar is guiding academics to participate in managerial activities, while the normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines encourage academics to choose not to involve in any managerial activities if they don't want to. In reality, the majority of academics also choose to avoid participating in managerial activities. Since the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars are aligned, and both have deep influence on social actors' behaviors, it might be difficult for the current regulative guideline to change academics' inclination in this aspect. If the regulations and policies do not change in the future, a tendency of fewer academics involving in managerial activities can be expected. Actually, this expected change, a further division of academic work, is coherent with the developmental trend of academic profession in international academic community in 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is held by Enders and Musselin (2008). Ender and Musselin (2008) believed that academics are more likely to concentrate on management or on teaching and research, while teaching and research themselves represent a further division of work.

Some academic activities, such as balancing the needs of research and teaching, connecting research to teaching, which are not presented in the regulative pillar, but in normative and cultural-cognitive pillars might also be fleeting in the future, if the regulative system do not follow up and support the behavior (see Figure 9). The prioritization of research activities might lead academics to neglect the importance of teaching. The majority of interviewed academics still persist in quality teaching practice might be related the tradition of normal education in B University. In Chinese tradition, a good scholar or educator is who can teach student knowledge and answer students' confusion. If the regulative pillar does not support academics to connect teaching and research, or even discourage them to do so in the future, academics will face a further division of academic

activities, mainly research and teaching, in the future, which is also coherent with the developmental trend of academic profession (Enders & Musselin, 2008).

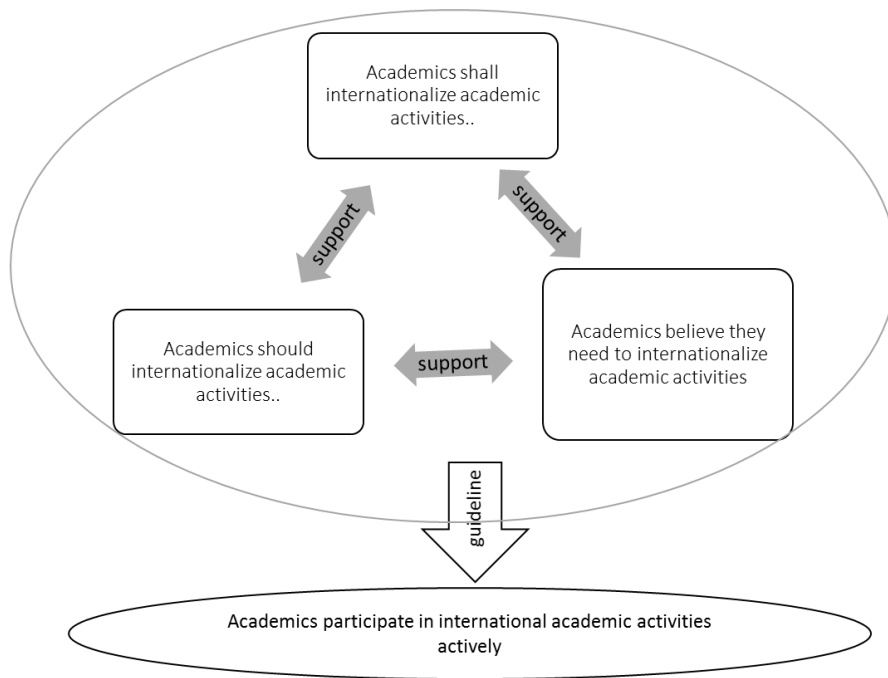


Figure 6 Example of academic activities which will persist and its relation with three pillars

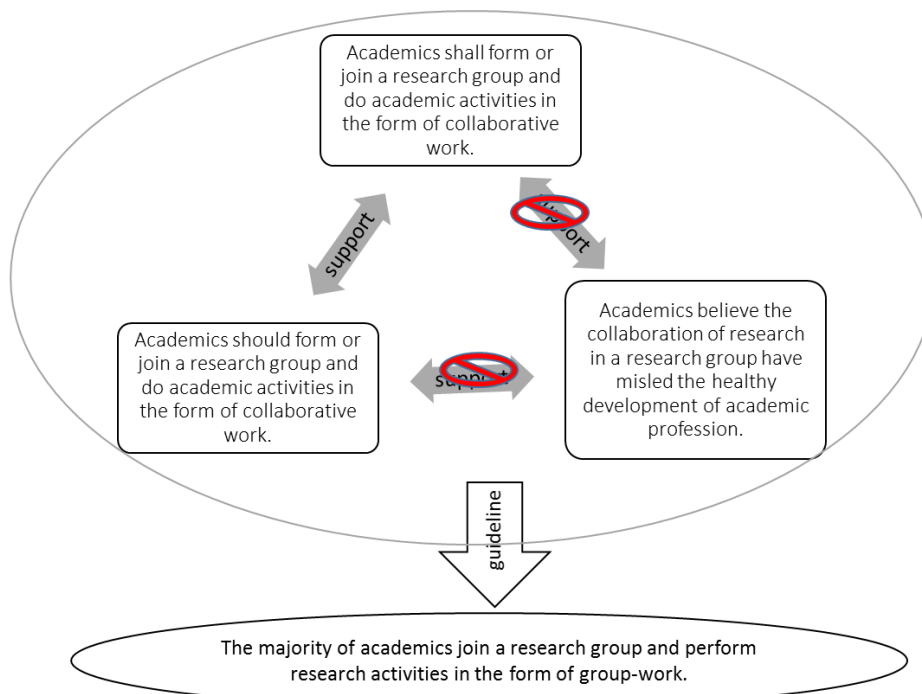


Figure 7 Example 1 of academic activities which will not persist and its relation with three pillars

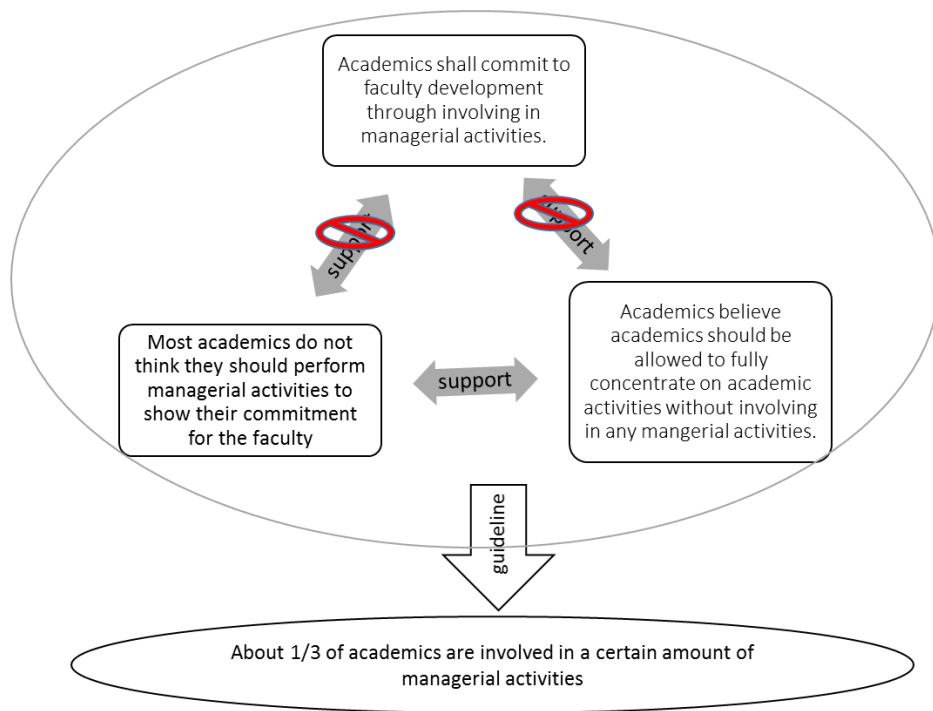


Figure 8 Example 2 of academic activities which will not persist and its relation with three pillars

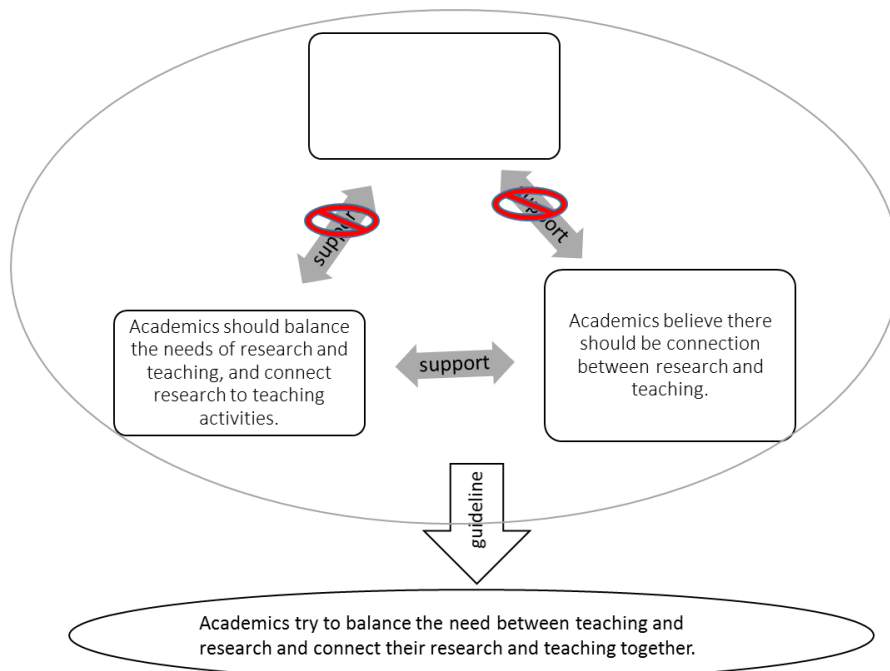


Figure 9 Example 3 of academic activities which might not persist and its relation with three pillars

## 6. Discussion/Conclusion

This final chapter deals with the reflections and conclusions of the study. It begins with the summary of the study and continues to discuss the major findings in the study, which is not a simple repetition of analysis result in the previous section. After that, the researcher reflects on the employment of theory and methodology in the study. At last, the researcher proposes some possible future research avenues.

### 6.1 Summary of the study

This study explored the effects of the current academic promotion policy on academic work in China's context. The study aimed at increasing the scholarly understanding of the impact of performance-based management, in particular the impact of performance-based academic promotion policy on academic work in China's context. The study was guided by the central research question: how do the policies and practices of current university academic promotion influence academic work in China's context? This research question was further interpreted to include three sub-research questions: 1) what are the policies and practices of the current university academic promotion in China and in B University? 2) what are the effects of academic promotion on academic work in Faculty E in B University? 3) in which ways and to what extent are the policies and practices of academic promotion affecting academic work in Faculty E?

By using a single case study and employing new institutional theory, the researcher tried to find out the answers to the research questions. The study, lasting from September 2013 to June 2014, selected the academic community in Faculty of Education (called Faculty E in the thesis) of a Chinese research university in Beijing as the single case. 11 participants, consisting of 3 policy-makers, 1 faculty manager and 7 academics, were interviewed from November 2013 to April 2014. Besides doing interviews, the researcher also reviewed the national academic promotion policy documents in China covering the period since 1986 as well as policy studies of that period, and relevant university and faculty documents in the case covering the period since 2009, news and existed literatures, which are relevant to the topic. Data triangulations and methods triangulations were used in the study. The description and justification for research methods were elaborated in Chapter 4.

New institutional theory was employed to develop the analytical framework for the study (see Chapter 3). The researcher first introduced Scott's framework of institutional pillars and carriers (see Table 1), and described the relations between symbolic systems of three pillars of institutions and social actions (see Figure 1). On the basis of Scott's theoretical framework of symbolic systems of three pillars and social actions (referring to Figure 1), the researcher regarded academics as social actors in institutions and academics work as social actors' actions in the institutional environment, and then developed the analytical framework for the study (See Figure 2). Scott's theoretical framework of symbolic systems of three pillars and social actions were operationalized in the study: the guidelines for academic work from the current university academic promotion policy were viewed as the regulative symbolic systems in the institution; the expectations of academic work in the case were seen as the normative symbolic systems to guide academic work; the academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion were interpreted as the cultural-cognitive symbolic systems to support academics' activities.

The first sub-research question, consisting of two parts---national policy of academic promotion in China and the university academic promotion policy of the case, was addressed separately in Section 2.2 and Section 5.1. The other two sub-research questions were answered in the analysis part (Chapter 5). First, the intended effects of the current university academic promotion policy, which are also the regulative guideline for academic work in the case, were interpreted and analyzed in Section 5.2. And then the normative guidelines for academic work, that is, the collective expectations of academic work, were interpreted in Section 5.3 through the analysis of academics' perception about what they think they are supposed to do. Academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion were analyzed in Section 5.4 I. By doing this, one can learn about academics' beliefs of academic work and academic promotion which guide their behaviors. It is difficult to measure academics' activities, but through academics' self-description and their perceptions of their activities, we can grasp the general picture academics' activities (see Section 5.4). The last section in Chapter 5 discussed to what extent and in what way academics have complied with the intended guidelines from the current academic promotion system for academic work. By doing so, the other two sub-research questions 2) and 3) were answered. The next section will continue to explain the answers to the three sub-research questions.

## 6.2 Major findings

This sections will further discuss some major findings of the study:

First, regarding the practices and policies of the current academic promotion in Chinese universities which is corresponding to sub-research question 1 (what are the policies and practices of the current university academic promotion in China and in B University?), the analysis (in Section 2.2 and Section 5.1) reveals that academic promotion is a centrally-controlled system in China. Though the state has been decentralizing the authority of promoting academics to universities as well as to provincial governments since the 1980s, all policy-making is still top-down, i.e. academics are hardly involved in the policy-making process. Policy-makers in the B University claimed the practice of academic promotion in B University is a mixed approach with both top-down guidelines and bottom-up involvements but we can also notice that the top-down regulations have a more fundamental impact on deciding how many academics and which academics should be promoted. The voices of peer academics as well as of students are almost neglected in the evaluation of academics in promotion procedures. Top-down approaches constitute the base of the current academic promotion system, while inside the system, only very few approaches are bottom-up. Basically, academics' involvement in the decision-making of academic promotion only can be seen in the voting process in the faculty HR committee meeting and the external peer review. Even so, the external peer review does not have much influence on the decision-making results while the voting process in the faculty HR committee meeting only involve a few powerful academics rather than the majority of academics, held by interviewed academics.

Second, regarding the impacts of the current academic promotion policy on academic work, which deals with the second sub-research question (what are the effects of academic promotion on academic work in Faculty E in B University?), the analysis of the intended effects of the current academic promotion policy on academic work (in Section 5.1) shows that the regulative guidelines for academic work from the current academic promotion policy and practices intend to guide academics in Faculty E to accord high priority to research, value the quality rather than quantity of research, cooperate with other researchers in a research group to do research, internationalize their academic activities, improve social engagement and perform managerial activities. We can notice that most of the intended effects have been realized, if we compare the policy-guiding activities with the real practices of academics. Under the regulative guidelines, interviewed academics have prioritized research, placed more emphasis on the quality of research, formed or joined research

group and worked with other academics together to do research. Academics in Faculty E have been internationalizing their activities actively. Academics in Faculty E have also come to realize the importance of social service and participate in activities of social service.

Third, in terms of the way and the extent that the policies and practices of academic promotion affecting academic work in Faculty E (the third sub-research question), the comprehensive analysis of regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive guidelines for academic work (in Section 5.5) has tried to provide a comprehensive answer. The analysis shows that academic work are guided by the varying constellations of regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive institutional pillars in the academic community. In other words, the current status of academic work is a product of the interactions between current regulative guidelines and policies for academic promotion, academics' binding expectations and academics' perceptions of academic work and conception of academic promotion. The current academic promotion policy does have impact on academic work, as mentioned in the last paragraph. However, not all the intended effects of the current academic promotion policy on academic work are fully realized. For example, though the policy intends to guide academics to perform managerial activities, the majority of academics try to avoid involving in managerial activities. Currently only one third of academics participate in managerial activities in Faculty E. It became also clear that not all these policy guided activities will persist. The analysis result shows that academics in Faculty E will continue internationalizing their activities, according high priority to research and involving in activities of social service. However, other policy-guiding activities, including joining a research group and doing research in the form of collaboration, publishing academic papers in international citation indices, and involving in managerial activities, might not persist in the future, for the reason that they are not supported by either the expectations of academic work (normative guidelines) or the academics' perceptions of academic work and academic promotion (cultural-cognitive guidelines), or both. For example, though academics are required by the current academic promotion policy and normatively induced to form or join a research group and conduct academic activities in the form of collaboration, academics' perception of academic work tell academics that this (collaboration of research) is not the best way for academics to do research because it has limited academic freedom. Academics might choose to quit working in a research group and begin to work individually in the future as to maintain their academic freedom. Interviewee A7's story of quitting working in a research group is a good example to support this point. Academics in Faculty E are also doing some other activities under the impact

of the expectations of academic work in the academic community and academics' conception of academic work, which are not guided by the current academic promotion policy, i.e. balancing the needs of research and teaching and connecting research to teaching. Because these activities lack the regulative support in the institution, they are also fleeting and one day academics might stop doing them in the future. In regards of the future development of academic work, we expect that these fleeting activities might persist or disappear, depending on the changes of regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive pillars of the institution.

Actually, the study does not just provide answers to the three sub-research questions as shown above. Analysis of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive guidelines on academic work in Faculty E shows that the impact of the current academic promotion policy on academic work are in particular noticeable in three areas: evaluation criteria, research groups and involvement in management.

The research also exposes that fair and recognizable evaluation criteria to measure the quality of academic outputs are missing. Gradually academics come to realize that quality of research is more important than quantity, while a few years ago they were all racing to increase the number of publications. Unfortunately a lack of fair and recognizable evaluation criteria for research quality stalls their motivation of improving the quality of research. The interviewed academics were worried about the over-emphasis of international citation indices in evaluating the quality of publications and the under-emphasis of peer review. Besides, the evaluation of teaching quality is also neglected in academic promotion, which discourages academics' motivation to perform quality teaching. The absences of clear, fair and recognizable evaluation criteria for quality gives leeway to the development of officialdom in academic promotion which may result in a loss of the academic spirit in academic ranks. Academic profession in China calls for a fair and recognizable evaluation system of the quality of academic outputs, which is based on peer review instead of bureaucratic logic, and takes both academics' and students' voice into account, instead of only the voices of senior academics and management. Also all different aspects of academic work, i.e. teaching, research and social service, should be included, instead basing academic promotion only on research output.



The imperfections of doing research in the form of collaborative work in research groups, which are widely criticized by interviewed academics, deserves our attention. It serves as a typical example of academics' behaviors, which is formed under the mutual impact of the idea of new public management and Chinese traditional culture, but goes in an unexpected direction. The aim of working as a group instead of working individually is to use limited resources more effectively and productively. However, research groups in universities are formed under the impact of traditional values of 'social groups' in the *danwei* era, in which group members are connected through *guanxi* and are expected to be loyal and committed to the group leader. As a result, research group members feel hijacked by the traditional values of 'social groups' and have to contribute their academic outputs to their group leaders as to demonstrate their commitment to the group. Inbreeding relations especially the supervisor-ship (*shimen relationship*) have great impact not only on the daily academic work, but also on the promotion of academics. From a surface perspective, we observe that research activities are carried out in a more efficient and effective way, but if we look inside the research group, we can discern that academics not only feel depressed by limited academic freedom and over-workload, but also are incensed about the unfair distribution of research outcomes. The characteristics of 'social groups' feature heavily in research groups in universities, which makes 'research group' no longer a basic research unit in the pursuit of knowledge and truth. As a result, academics who persist with academic freedom and choose not to join a research group might be marginalized, whilst academics who join a research group might worry about their lost academic freedom and research outcomes. The competition for research projects and funding opportunities is originally introduced to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of resources; however, when the competition become a group-to-group competition, not a person-to-person competition anymore, it furthers the differentiation orders of research groups in the academic community, and even enlarges the disparity between powerful and powerless academics in the organization. If the situation continues, it might lead to the development of academic hegemony in a university, which has great influence on resources distribution as well as academics' personal development.

The enforcement of managerial activities from the university management is another example that shows the lingering impact of Chinese traditional culture on academic profession. We can see from the case that faculty commitment is still highly valued by the university management, but academics are more eager to break the reckless of faculty commitment and to fully concentrate on the

development in their disciplines. As mentioned before, this manifests that academics are evolving from *danweiren* to 'academic worker'. Actually, Faculty E's managers' emphasis of faculty commitment in academic promotion as well as their expression of disappointment at the majority's resistance to fulfill the management work reflects that the university management are anxious by the fact that under the impact of current performance-based academic promotion policy, academics become more self-centered and more independent from the organization, and intend to solely focus on their own performance. Indeed, it is difficult to make a judgment whether this transition of academic identity is a merit or not, if we consider the issue from the standpoint of the organization management: organization commitment is very important for an organization's sustainable development. But one suggestion for the university management might be that university can diversify the ways of faculty commitment, instead of pushing academics to perform managerial activities, which is regarded by most academics as a distortion of academic work and a limitation of academic autonomy. For example, a possible solution could be to encourage academics to use the housestyle of the university when they are doing various activities.

The call for fair and recognizable criteria for the evaluation of the quality of academics' performance, the reflection of imperfections of research groups and the conflicts of enforcing managerial activities in an institution all reflect the fact that academic profession in China is faced with the challenge of making a good use of managerial tools in the context of Chinese traditional culture. The research shows academic work in Chinese universities is changing under the impact of the current academic promotion system, but we also need to consider that whether the changes are beneficial, sustainable and suitable for Chinese academic profession.

### 6.3 Reflections on methodology and theory

The use of a single case study provided more in-depth understandings of the issue, but because of the limited number of cases, the findings cannot be easily generalized to other cases. First of all, a selected university is a public research university in China, which means research results may not apply to private institutions. Secondly, it should also be taken into consideration that the results should be limited to the field of education as only the faculty of education has been under review in this study.

New institutional theory provided a framework/analytical model for the research to follow and proves to be a useful tool for understanding the relationship between institutional environment and social actions of academics, especially in terms of understanding the way how the current academic promotion policy have impact on academic work in the academic community. Scott (2008) proposed the idea of institutions that are constituted by three different pillars, the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars, but let aside the relationships between these three pillars and their impact on social actions. Therefore this study extended the framework, and pulled together the framework of three pillars with the social actions. This construct was used as the analytical framework for the study. Nevertheless, a lack of knowledge about the interactions of three pillars inside an institution and about the way how the three pillars influence social actions set limits to a further understanding of the interactions among regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive guidelines for academics' activities and changes in academic work.

#### 6.4 Further research avenues

Finally, the researcher would like to propose some possible avenues for future research: first, we can extend the scope of the research to validate the applicability of the theoretical framework and gain further empirical insights in a comparative way. For example, the number of cases can be expanded and include more faculties from different disciplines in different levels of universities in China. It would be interesting to see differences and commonalities between different disciplines and different levels of universities, and it would be also interesting to see the whole picture that they depict of academic work in Chinese HE system. By doing so, the empirical breadth might expand. It would be also interesting to make a multi-county comparative study. For example, make a comparison with the same case study in an American university? Since most of interviewed academics mentioned the current Chinese HE system is developing under deep impact of American system, it would be interesting to see the differences of impacts on academic work from the same approach in these two countries. Second, we can also extend the depth of the study of academic work. For instance, we can study the impacts on academics' preference of research projects, research methods, teaching methods, and academics' conception of teaching and learning relationship. It might be interesting to see how the academic promotion policy influence academics' daily practices. Third, we can also do a follow-up study and revisit the selected faculty, since such a longitudinal approach is rare and would allow a more detailed study of the impacts of current academic promotion policy on changing academic work.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1 Example of Interview protocol (in English)

Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewed by \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Policy-maker Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Current title: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Manager Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Current title: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Academics Current Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Result of promotion in 2013: \_\_\_\_\_

Part 1 Warm-up: Brief introduction by the interviewer regarding the overall study, introduce the interviewer, explain the purpose of interviews, ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the study, and ask for consent of recording.

#### Part 2 Gathering information

##### For the director of FM unit in University B (Interviewee P1):

- A. Could you describe current policies of academic promotion in your university? are there any policy documents available for studying?
- B. Are there any key changes in the related policies in recent years? what are they? and why?
- C. How does your university formulate the policies? what are the rationales behind the policies?
- D. What are the process of promoting academics in your university?
- E. What do you think about the influence of academic promotion on academic activities?
- F. What do you think about the current academic promotion system in your university? if you are going to make any improvement of policies now, In what direction it will be improved?
- G. Any final thought on any of the issues raised? Any recommendations for the study?

##### For the vice director of HR Office and vice chairman of HR Committee in Faculty E (Interviewee P2):

- A. Could you describe the role of faculty in the university academic promotion? What responsibilities do the faculty take in the process of promoting academics?
- B. what are the current policies and practices in your faculty to promote academics? How do your faculty formulate the criteria? are there any policy documents available for studying?
- C. Are there any key changes in the related policies in recent years? what are they? and why?
- D. What's the role of Human Resource office and that of the HR Committee in the faculty academic promotion? who are the members?
- E. Regarding the performance indicators of research, teaching, and social service, how do your faculty use them to evaluate academics? which factor is more influential in the promotion process?
- F. What do you think are the expectation of doing academic activities in your faculty?
- G. What are your personal perceptions of academic activities?
- H. What do you think about the influence of academic promotion on academic activities?

- I. What do you think about the current academic promotion system in your faculty? if you are going to make any improvement now, In what direction it will be improved?
- J. Any final thought on any of the issues raised? Any recommendations for the study?

For the assistant of directors of HR Office in Faculty E (Interviewee P3):

- A. Could you describe the role of faculty in the university academic promotion? What responsibilities do the faculty take in the process of promoting academics?
- B. what are the current policies and practices in your faculty to promote academics? Is the performance indicators and criteria to evaluate and promote academics in your faculty different from that of your university? How do your faculty formulate the criteria? are there any policy documents available for studying?
- C. Are there any key changes in the related policies in recent years? what are they? and why?
- D. What's the role of human resource office and that of the HR Committee in the faculty academic promotion? who are the members?
- E. How many academics in your faculty currently? and in each year in general how many academics would apply for promotion to different academic ranks? what about the success rate?
- F. Regarding the performance indicators of research, teaching, and social service, how do your faculty use them to evaluate academics? based on quantity or quality? or both? which factor is more influential in the promotion process?

For the member of HR Committee in Faculty E (Interviewee M1):

- A. Could you describe current practices of academic promotion in your faculty? what is the role of the HR Committee in the university academic promotion?
- B. Regarding the performance indicators of research, teaching, and social service, how do your faculty use them to evaluate academics?
- C. What do you think about the influence of academic promotion on academic activities?
- D. What do you think are the expectation of doing academic activities in your faculty?
- E. What are your personal perceptions of academic activities?
- F. What do you think about the current academic promotion system in your faculty? if you are going to make any improvement now, In what direction it will be improved?

For academics in Faculty E (Interviewee A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7):

- A. Can you describe your academic experiences?
- B. Can you describe your current situation of your work?
- C. Are you satisfied with the current status of your work? What is your preferred status?
- D. Among different kinds of academic activities, e.g. research, teaching, social service, if you are asked to rank them regarding the importance according to your preference, how will you rank them? Why?
- E. From your point of view, what are the expectations of different academic activities in your faculty?

- F. What do you think about the influence of the academic promotion policies and practices on academic activities?
- G. Do you think the guideline of the academic promotion to conduct academic activities meet academic' shared perceptions and expectations of academic activities? Why?
- H. Do you think the current policies and practices of academic promotion are rational? Why? If not, what suggestions you would provide?
- I. Any final thought on any of the issues raised?
- J. Any suggestions for my study?

Part 3 Wrap up: Express gratitude for participants. Make agreement on future communication if there is any further information needed. Ensure all participants will be informed of the research result once the research is finished.

Part 4 Self-reflection: Sort out the field notes. Make reflection on the impression of the interviewee and of the information provided by the interviewee, and on interviewer's personal performance during the interview.

#### Example of Interview protocol (in Chinese) 访谈提纲

受访者: \_\_\_\_\_ 受访日期: \_\_\_\_\_ 受访人: \_\_\_\_\_

☐政策制定者 职位\_\_\_\_\_ 职称\_\_\_\_\_

☐管理者 职位\_\_\_\_\_ 职称\_\_\_\_\_

☐参评教师 现在职称\_\_\_\_\_ 参评前职称\_\_\_\_\_

前奏: 简单的自我介绍和关于研究的背景介绍, 了解受访者的背景, 征求受访者同意, 对访谈进行录音。

收集数据:

针对学校政策制定者的采访 (P1):

1. 能否简单介绍下贵校的职称评定体系? 有没有什么政策文本我可以参考的?
2. 这套政策什么时候开始用的? 之前是什么样的? 有什么变化?
3. 这套政策制定的过程大概是怎么样的?
4. 能否描述下贵校职称评选的过程?
5. 您认为职称评定政策对贵校教师的学术活动有哪些影响?
6. 您如何评价现行的职称评定政策? 如果让您进行改进, 您会从哪方面改进?

7. 对我的研究，您有没有什么想法和建议？欢迎提供改进意见。

针对学院政策制定者的采访 1 (P2):

1. 在贵校职称评选过程中，贵学院主要承担了哪些角色和工作？
2. 目前贵学院是如何评职称的？
3. 学院职称评定的标准和方法是怎么制定出来的？
4. 学院学术委员会在职称评定中的角色？能否介绍下成员组成？
5. 您如果评价职称评定的各项标准？哪个更重要？
6. 您如何看待评职称对您平时进行学术活动（教学、科研和社会服务，以及国际化）的影响？
7. 您所在学术单位（学院或学部）的老师们对如何开展教学、科研和社会服务和相关的国际学术活动有没有比较共性的认识和理解？是什么？
8. 您觉得您现行的职称评定体系有没有什么要改进的地方？该如何改进？
9. 最后，再次感谢您的宝贵时间。如果可以，也希望您能给我的访谈和我的研究提点宝贵意见。谢谢！

针对学院政策制定者的采访 2 (P3):

1. 在贵校职称评选过程中，贵学院主要承担了哪些角色和工作？
2. 目前贵学院是如何评职称的？
3. 学院职称评定的标准和方法是怎么制定出来的？
4. 学院学术委员会在职称评定中的角色？能否介绍下成员组成？
5. 您如果评价职称评定的各项标准？哪个更重要？
6. 能否提供下贵学院教师组成的一些基本信息及政策文本？
7. 最后，再次感谢您的宝贵时间。如果可以，也希望您能给我的访谈和我的研究提点宝贵意见。谢谢！

针对学院中层管理者的采访(P4):

1. 能否介绍下学术委员会在职称评选中的作用？具体是如何评选教师的？
2. 您如何评价现行的职称评定的标准和评选过程？
3. 您如果评价职称评定的各项标准？哪个更重要？
4. 您如何看待评职称对学术活动（教学、科研和社会服务，以及国际化）的影响？
5. 您认为学院的老师们对如何开展教学、科研和社会服务和相关的国际学术活动有没有比较共性的认识和理解？是什么？
6. 您个人如何看待学术活动？
7. 您觉得您现行的职称评定体系有没有什么要改进的地方？该如何改进？
8. 最后，再次感谢您的宝贵时间。如果可以，也希望您能给我的访谈和我的研究提点宝贵意见。谢谢！

针对参评教师(A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7):

1. 能否介绍下您到目前为止的工作经历？
2. 能否介绍下您现在的工作情况？
3. 在您从事的各种学术活动（科研，教学，社会服务）中，您最看重哪个？为什么？
4. 您如何看待现在的工作安排？
5. 您所在学术单位（学院或学部）的老师们对如何开展教学、科研和社会服务和相关的国际学术活动有没有比较共性的认识和理解？是什么？
6. 您如何看待评职称对您平时进行学术活动（教学、科研和社会服务，以及国际化）的影响？
7. 目前的职称评定体制所引导的教师如何进行学术活动（比如说，教学，科研等）和您的想法（您想做的您觉得应该如何做的）一致吗？
8. 您觉得您所在高校现行的职称评定体系有没有什么要改进的地方？该如何改进？
9. 最后，再次感谢您的宝贵时间。如果可以，也希望您能给我的访谈和我的研究提点宝贵意见。谢谢！

收尾：对受访者表示感谢，并征求同意为将来如有需要进一步信息收集做准备。

自我反思：访谈结束，先用录音笔记录下自己的访谈感受，和反思，随后整理访谈笔记。

## Appendix 2 List of interviewees

No.	label	gender	position	current academic rank
1	P1	female	the director of the FM unit in University B, one of the university policy-makers	not applicable
2	P2	male	vice director of HR Office and vice chairman of the HR Committee in Faculty E	full professor
3	P3	female	assistant of director of HR Office, a senior manager in HR Office in Faculty E	not applicable
4	M1	male	director of a department in Faculty E, and a member of the HR Committee	full professor

No.	label	gender	age	fields of research	graduate university (Ph.D.)	international study/work background	current academic rank	former academic rank (before academic promotion in 2013)
5	A1	female	30-35	international organizations and educational policies	B University	Yes (USA)	associate professor	lecturer
6	A2	male	36-40	ICTs and education	B University	No	associate professor	lecturer
7	A3	male	40-45	academic profession, faculty development	B University	No	associate professor	lecturer
8	A4	female	30-35	French education system, educational policy studies	B University	Yes (France)	lecturer	lecturer
9	A5	male	30-35	theories of education, moral education	B University	No	lecturer	lecturer
10	A6	male	46-50	social engagement, sociology, rural education studies	A university overseas	Yes (USA, H.K.)	full professor	associate professor
11	A7	male	36-40	historical and philosophic studies of education, higher education	B University	Yes (USA)	associate professor	associate professor

### Appendix 3 Invitation letter of interview (in English)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for reading my email.

I'm Gaoming Zheng, a master student in the Erasmus Mundus Program, the Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE program). The MARIHE program is an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course supported by the Erasmus Mundus Program of the European Commission. It is one of the leading master program in Europe, provided through the cooperation of Danube University Krems in Austria, University of Tampere in Finland, Beijing Normal University in China and Osnabruck University of Applied Science in Germany. Currently I am studying in the University of Tampere in Finland and working on my master thesis. Enclosed please find my CV, if you would like to know more about me.

By writing this email, I'm sincerely inviting you to participate in my research for the master thesis together with me, through accepting my interview.

My master thesis is on the topic of academic promotion and academic work in China. The research question is 'How do the policies and practices of current university academic promotion affect academic work in China's context?' The main purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of academic promotion policy on academic activities and provide policy implications for future policy-making as to develop a supportive environment for academics. In order to have an in-depth study of the topic, I decided to use a single case study to seek for the answer to the research question, and selected the community of academics in your faculty as the case. Interviews are a primary source of data for the study.

The purpose of interview is to collect data of your personal perception of academic activities and academic promotion, and your opinion about the norms of academic activities and the expectations of conducting academic activities.

I will be very grateful for your participation and the information you provide. All the information of participants will be anonymous in data analysis. Anonymity is highly respected and persisted in the research.

Interviews are expected to carry out during the period of March 29 to April 13, lasting for 40 to 80 minutes. I'm so sorry that because I am currently studying in Finland, I cannot visit you and do the interview with you face to face. But fortunately thanks to technology, if it is convenient for you, I would like to do that through online phone calls, e.g. skype, or QQ. Please let me know if you are willing to participate in the interview, we can further discuss and arrange schedule in regards of your convenience.

Once the study is finished, I will share the analysis result with you. If you have any suggestions or comments for my study, please don't hesitate to let me know. I will be very grateful for that.

If it is possible, could you kindly reply to me by March 27<sup>th</sup> and inform me of your willingness of the interview? As to make sure the email has arrived at your mail box successfully, a reminder will be sent out on March 25<sup>th</sup>, and probably a phone call will reach you to confirm with that also. Sincerely hope it won't bother you too much!

If unfortunately you cannot accept my interview, I can also understand. And if you are interested in the study, please kindly let me know, I will share the analysis result with you when it is finished.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me.

Looking forward to your reply!

With best regards,

Gaoming Zheng

MARIHE program

#### Invitation letter of interview (in Chinese)

尊敬的 老师，

见信好！

我叫郑高明，是北师大教育学部国际比较教育学院高等教育研究与创新项目（MARIHE 项目）的学生。MARIHE 项目是一个由欧盟支持，由中国北京师范大学、芬兰坦佩雷大学、奥地利多瑙大学和德国奥斯纳布吕克应用科学大学共同承办的国际研究生项目。目前我已完成前一年半的学习，在芬兰坦佩雷大学准备我的硕士论文。

这次冒昧打扰，还望老师您见谅。在此，我真诚地邀请老师您接收我的访谈，帮助我完成毕业论文的数据收集工作！为了方便您了解我的情况，我已随邮件附上简历，您可以查阅：）谢谢！

我的毕业论文研究的是中国大学职称评定及其对大学教师学术活动产生的影响。具体的研究问题是：探讨目前的高校职称评定体系对大学教师学术活动的影响。（How do the policies and practices of current university academic promotion affect academics' perceptions of academic work in China's context?）目前国内各个大学的职称评定政策都是在教育部的政策指导下，根据自己学校的发展目标自行制定的。因此，为了更深入的了解职称评定对教师的影响及教师对学术活动的看法，我决定运用案例分析的研究形式，以贵校为案例，用访谈和文本分析的



方法进行资料的收集与分析，进而解答研究问题。根据对象不同，访谈分为两个部分：一是访谈学校人事方面负责人，以进一步了解相关政策实施过程及政策背后的内涵（目前这一阶段数据收集已接近尾声）；二是访谈教师，目的是了解教师对学术活动的看法以及职称评定对教师的学术活动和对学术活动的理解有没有影响，具体会有哪些影响。访谈的教师样本是从近几年参与职称评定申请的老师中随机抽样产生。

此次联系 老师您，就是希望能邀请老师您接受我的访谈，为我的研究提供数据、帮助和指导。

此次研究，虽然以贵校为案例分析，但最后会以匿名的形式（如中国某高校）记入研究报告和成果中，保证不会对贵校造成任何不良的影响。同时我也向您承诺，本次访谈仅用于学术研究，在相关的研究报告或论文中对您的身份信息予以保密。整个访谈预计持续 30-50 分钟。具体的访谈时间可根据您的时间讨论安排，大概会在三月底至四月上旬这段时间（约 3 月 29 日到 4 月 13 日间）。因为我现在还在芬兰学习，无法回国现场拜访您，也希望 老师您能体谅，并允许我以电话或 skype 或 qq 视频的形式进行访谈。

一旦研究顺利完成，我也会以邮件的形式与您分享最终的研究成果。如果您对我的研究有任何意见和建议，也恳请您不吝赐教，我将会非常感激，因为对我而言这也是一次学习过程。

如果可以，老师您能否在 3 月 27 日前回复我是否愿意接受访谈？自然我内心是百分之一百二十地希望老师您能接受此次访谈，为我的研究提供支持，在此，提前说声谢谢！如果您由于某些原因不能接受访谈，我也能够理解，仍然感谢您能阅读我的邮件，并且如果您感兴趣，我也会和您分享最终的研究成果。

考虑到邮件通信有时会发生滞后问题和垃圾邮件问题，我可能还会在 3 月 27 日之前致电叨扰您，进一步确认和邀请，希望不会给老师您带来太多麻烦。如有不便，还请您谅解！

如果 老师您对我的研究有任何疑问，也请随时联系我，我将十分乐意解答。

期待您的回复！

学生 郑高明（敬上）